

Saturday 13 December 1997 (IR65p) 70p No 3,481

Labour has declared war on BBC Radio's Today programme, threatening to suspend co-operation in retaliation for 'the John Humphrys problem'. Anthony

Requests for ministers to appear on *Today* could be denied by the party if John Humphrys persists in interrupting them and denying them the opportunity to put their views to the listeners. David Hill, director of communications, said in an exchange of correspondence leaked to the Liberal Democrats.

After an interview with Harriet Harman, Social Security Secretary, on lone parents' benefit on Wednesday, Mr Hill wrote to John Barton, the editor: "We ... are seriously considering whether, as a party, we will suspend co-operation when you make bids through us for government ministers."

Although programmes make interview requests directly to departments, party headquarters acts as a clearing house and because of tight links between party and government, Mr Hill probably speaks for all ministers. He told Mr Barton the whole of Millbank headquarters was talking about the interview "when I got back from the Pam meeting", the daily media co-ordination meeting chaired by Peter Mandelson, Minister without Portfolio, and attended by Alastair Campbell, the Prime Minister's Chief Press Secretary. Mr Hill said that after the "ridiculous exchange" and the repeated interruptions no one would have been any the wiser as to *Mr Harman's* explanation of government policy - a point made by some Labour backbench critics after she wound up the Commons debate that night. Mr Barton said he was surprised: Mr Harman had not complained at the time and had answered questions at length. "I felt this morning that I was listening to a rigorous, fair-minded interview which illuminated an important policy issue."

Mr Barton said listeners would be the losers from any suspension of co-operation and that he was completely satisfied they would continue to have a good working relationship with Labour. "We have received full co-operation since the exchange of letters. The matter is now at an end."

3-A BBC spokesman said: "We take everything the political parties say to us seriously, but we are an independent public-service broadcaster and the remit for our interviewers is to ask the questions that we believe the public, our listeners, want answered."

They certainly did not perceive there to be a "John Humphrys problem. He is one of our top political interviewers. We believe he got it right." A source said a Humphrys interview with Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, the following morning had, if anything, been more robust than the one with Ms Harman.

A high-contrast, black and white image of a chessboard, heavily distorted by digital noise and artifacts. The board is tilted, and the pieces are barely visible as dark shapes against the light squares. The image is framed by a thick black border.

Good cents: Bill Gates gazes from a photomosaic made of digital-image bank notes, commissioned by the billionaire from Robert Silvers. For more on the Microsoft magnate, see page 7, and, for photomosaics, turn over to the Big Picture

price of Britain's
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first wave of
European Monetary
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Prime Minister was
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issions. Katherine
watched a two-tier
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eight hours of tense and
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which would limit the
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allowing Euro-X, an ex-
e grouping of member

states taking part in the single currency, to proceed.

The debate was clearly acrimonious. Mr Blair and the Luxembourg Foreign Minister, Jacques Poos, were caught on camera disputing Britain's right to be treated as an equal partner. The German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, took Mr Blair to task several times. According to official notes of the debate seen by *The Independent*, Mr Kohl interrupted Mr Blair at one point to remonstrate.

"I like this less and less," he said. "Tony can't say we have excluded the UK, we are trying to accommodate him."

It was not clear if a final decision could be reached last night. But it appeared Mr Blair had stopped challenging the principle of a two-tier Europe, a system whereby those not taking part in the single currency

could be excluded from a club for debate on currency management questions linking those sharing the new money.

Under a compromise on the table last night, Britain and the three other countries not likely to join monetary union in the first wave - Sweden, Denmark and Greece - looked set to win some safeguards against marginalisation and were gaining ground in an argument on reining in the remilit of the new grouping.

Government officials were presenting these as key concessions which would leave most debate and all real power with Ecofin, the EU council of finance ministers where Gordon Brown the Chancellor represents Britain.

The formula drafted by the Luxembourg Presidency and the Dutch would enshrine

meetings of all 15 EU finance ministers as the only decision-making forum while at the same time allowing ministers from the "in" countries to meet for joint management of the single currency on issues affecting them.

Britain and the other "outs" fear that Euro-X would effectively shut them out of the top table of economic and political decision making. Those fears were to be further allayed by a series of written guarantees. They would automatically receive an agenda prior to the meetings of Euro-X and could raise objections if they felt a

But the French were leading resistance to Britain's demand that the outs should "by right" be invited to take part in all but a narrowly defined series of confidential topics - for example, negotiations prior to a realignment

of the value of the Euro against an "out" member's currency.

The "ins" were still insisting that it would be up to the Euro-insiders to determine what constituted an issue of common interest and whether to let the outsiders then participate. In the event of a dispute those not in the common currency club could demand to have the agenda item referred to the next meeting of Ecofin.

Mr Blair's spokesman interpreted this as a victory which would in effect render the ERM-X discussions irrelevant. "Power will remain in Ecofin," he said.

Web address: <http://www.independent.co.uk>

But the interpretation provided by other governments was sharply at odds with this. Their officials said that there would be nothing stopping the inner group from holding their discussions on the disputed matter before it was referred to all 15 ministers.

The fact that Britain cannot stop this happening, goes to the heart of Mr Blair's fears about the new grouping: that those inside the Euro-zone could "pre-cook" decisions on crucial economic matters before referring them on to the other countries for rubber-stamping.

Time Off, page 2
The Eye
Time Off,

Web address: <http://www.independent.co.uk>

A black and white photograph of a person in a costume. They are wearing a mask with a crown or tiara on top. They are holding a sword or a long staff. The image is dark and grainy.

A collage of various media elements. At the top, a 'SPORT' magazine cover features a bird logo. Below it, a 'YOUR MONEY' magazine cover with the subtitle 'PERSONAL FINANCE PROPERTIES & INVESTING' shows a person's face. To the right, an 'EYE' magazine cover with the subtitle 'FOOD BEAT THE HUSTLE & TALK THE TALK' features a woman's face. Below the 'EYE' cover is a 'TIME OFF' magazine cover with the subtitle 'TRAVEL LIFESTYLE & SPORT'. On the left, a newspaper clipping shows a person's face with the text 'New York City' and 'The New York Times'. At the bottom, a large, dark, abstract image of a person's face is visible, along with a small 'New York Times' clipping.

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Police face lambasting

report into the handling of the Stephen Lawrence murder will contain stinging criticism of the police, *The Independent* can reveal. The inquiry into the stabbing of the 18-year-old South London teenager, to be published on Monday by the Police Complaints Authority, will re-ignite a sensitive subject with wide implications. **Page 3**

llich Ramirez Sanchez, better known as Carlos the Jackal, clearly enjoyed the first day of his trial for murder yesterday after three years in French jails. The former Public Enemy Number One smiled so enthusiastically at the mostly female jury that he was told off by the presiding judge. He gave his profession as 'professional revolutionary'. Page 11

Heathrow Airport is expected to be operating nearly normal services today after fire broke out in a Burger King restaurant in Terminal One and spread through ducting in the roof. No one was hurt, but more than 300 flights had to be cancelled, stranding thousands of passengers in the UK and Europe. **Page 3**

2/BRIEFING

COLUMN ONE

Stickers put brakes on high-speed video driving

Perhaps the cinemas in Acton, west London, should show more James Dean or Marlon Brando films. In the summer, Michael Webster, a local resident, wrote to the House of Lords to complain that "I don't think it's far-fetched to suspect that [young people] get their ideas of driving from the way in which they have driven video racing cars."

Perhaps he hasn't seen *Rebel Without a Cause*, the James Dean film in which young men play chicken by driving at top speed towards a sheer drop, or *The Wild One*, in which Marlon Brando perfects his high-speed sneer on a motorbike.

But his views were duly forwarded to the Home Office, and to Jack Straw, who handed his letter to the Video Standards Council with a query as to whether computer games should have some sort of warning telling people not to imitate this behaviour at home, or on the road. The VSC forwarded it to the European Leisure Software Publisher's Association (ELSPA), which represents the games industry.

Conveniently, the news of this emerged just as a new "driving" game called Grand Theft Auto was released for the Sony Playstation. Like most computer "driving" games it depicts high-speed pursuits, crashes and complete disregard for fuel economy - which has earned it a VSC "18" sticker.

But Steve Cheese, ELSPA's operations manager, said a warning sticker



Hot pursuit: the new 'driving' game Grand Theft Auto

on games would "serve no purpose". He commented: "I think most people are intelligent enough to know not to do that sort of thing. But there does seem to be a bit of a nanny attitude permeating through everything at the moment."

ELSPA is meeting the Home Office soon to put its point. A Home Office spokesman said of the sticker idea: "We would like to talk to people in the industry first, not just dismiss an idea out of hand."

And surely ELSPA should consider that children have been seen copying kung-fu leaps like those in *Mortal Kombat*, another hugely popular game? Mr Cheese was unconvinced. "It's no different from me as a kid pretending to be a knight in armour, or cowboys and Indians," he said. "There's no evidence that games actually influence behaviour at all."

And even if there is, what if someone invents a video game in which you have to help old ladies across the road, rescue lost kittens and paint pensioners' fences? Maybe that really will need a warning sticker - to say that it doesn't represent reality.

— Charles Arthur, Science Editor

PEOPLE



Talent honoured: Playwright Tom Stoppard received a knighthood and comedian Victoria Wood was made an OBE yesterday at Buckingham Palace. Photograph: Rebecca Naden/PA

Bail for woman in baby Karli kidnap case

The woman accused of snatching the baby Karli Hawthorne was freed on bail yesterday.

A judge overturned the decision taken by Basildon magistrates on Monday that Denise Giddings, 33, should be remanded in custody in London's Holloway prison.

She was charged with the abduction of baby Karli from the maternity unit of Basildon General Hospital in Essex a week ago.

In a statement read to open court after an hour-long hearing, Judge Philip Clegg said he had made his decision after reading psychiatric reports on Mrs Giddings.

"I am satisfied in this case that the public will not be in any danger by Mrs Giddings being out on bail. I have granted her bail on fairly stringent terms," he said.

"These terms will mean her residing at an undisclosed address and on a substantial surety."

Mrs Giddings, a mother of three from Lagodon Hills, Basildon, left court with her family for an unknown address. Barry Spanjar, her solicitor, said she was "relieved and a little bit tearful".

He refused to go into what was discussed in court, as the decision was made in chambers, with no members of the public or press present.

But he said: "Denise is very relieved and anxious to see her children. She wants to spend some time with her boys and have Christmas with her family."

Mrs Giddings' mother, father, sister and other members of her family were at court and she was expected to see them all yesterday.

Mr Spanjar said: "It is going to take time for her to find her feet again. She has had a horrendous last few days in Holloway prison and it will take some time to get back to some degree of normality." Mrs Giddings will appear again at magistrates court on Monday as part of normal procedure, when it is anticipated the case will be adjourned for six to eight weeks.

Karli was found after 14 hours and returned to her parents, Karl Hawthorne and his partner, Tanya, last Saturday. Mother and daughter were allowed home from hospital on Tuesday, travelling with a police escort.

— Louise Jury

Domestic tantrums keep spotlight on Sara

Sara Netanyahu is once more under attack for bullying her staff, her bodyguards, her hairdresser and her husband.

"If the prime minister were to have seen what you did to his shoes, he would have butchered you," she screamed, as she hurled a pair of her husband's shoes that she considered improperly shined at Rachel Yaakov, who for 30 years had worked as a domestic servant in the prime minister's residence.

Mrs Yaakov, 60, now sits at home, though still paid by the Israeli state - one of a growing list of casualties of a Sara Netanyahu tantrum. Since her husband took

office 18 months ago she has fired three nannies and two secretaries and become the most famously unpopular Israeli first lady ever.

Once she insisted her staff taste wine delivered to the residence in case it was poisoned. "It didn't matter to her that I die, the important thing was that she gets her wine," Rosi Persial, her personal secretary, was quoted as saying by the daily *Yediot Aharanot*.

Most stories by former or current employees show her as inconsiderate, authoritarian and neurotic. When she fired Tanya Shaw, her first nanny, last year for burning the soup, she had her sec-

retary search Ms Shaw's suitcase in case she had stolen anything. An eyewitness said: "Sara instructed her to shake every piece of clothing, even the nanny's used underwear and dirty laundry."

The most serious allegation is that she forced Mr Netanyahu to break all contact with Noa, his 19-year-old daughter from his first marriage. Last year, he even stopped support payments for her, until forced to resume them by the threat of legal action. The prime minister now only meets Noa late at night at his office and the meetings are kept secret from his wife. — Patrick Cockburn, Jerusalem

UPDATE

EDUCATION

Students apply for more loans

The number of students applying for government loans rose from 59 per cent to 64 per cent of those eligible in the year 1996-1997.

The Student Loans Company annual report for the past academic year shows that just over 590,000 loans were paid out, an increase over the previous year of around 30,000 borrowers.

Three years ago, the proportion of eligible students taking out loans was less than half.

There was a 3 per cent increase in the number of borrowers who were allowed to defer repayment of their loans. Just over 9 per cent of borrowers who had not applied to defer repayment and who had missed two or more consecutive payments were officially classified as being in default.

The company says that it is paying out loans more quickly. The percentage paid out within 21 days of an application went up from 96 per cent to 99.7 per cent.

Around £877m was paid out in loans and the average amount of money borrowed rose from £1,252 to £1,487.

The student loan company, set up in 1989, is the non-profit-making organisation which administers the loan scheme.

Ministers are proposing to collect future loan repayments through the Inland Revenue.

LIFESTYLE

Girl power stops outside car bonnet

Girl power has not reached the world of car maintenance, according to a survey released yesterday.

Nineteen out of twenty British women rely on their partners or their local garage to look after their car, the survey for Halfords, the car accessories retailer, found. Most women do not feel confident in doing even the simplest maintenance jobs. Half the women questioned said they never checked tyre pressure, even though there are more than 40,000 successful prosecutions every year for faulty tyres; 46 per cent said they never checked or topped up their oil and water, and 91 per cent had never changed a battery. Five per cent said they did not know how to open the bonnet and 40 per cent claimed they would rather do the washing-up.

Chris Smith, a spokesman for Halfords, said the findings showed a distinct lack of "girl power". "But basic car maintenance is not the complicated job that most women imagine." Lack of confidence and basic knowledge were shown to be the primary reasons for women not looking after their cars, and the store has produced a series of car maintenance manuals to help. They have been hailed as "revolutionary" by the Plain English Campaign.

— Louise Jury



Chris Smith

COMMUNICATIONS

Mobile irritation over phone pests

One in three of us has been annoyed by the mobile menace at some time and only one in 25 says there are no places which should be off limits to mobile phone users.

Trains, buses and cars are amongst the places where people most want mobile phones banned.

Almost a thousand people were questioned for the NOP survey on mobile phones commissioned by Tandy, the high-street electrical retailer, and the reaction to their use in most public places was a thumbs-down. Nearly 40 per cent had been positively annoyed by someone using a mobile on a bus or train. Just over half that number had taken exception to phone users in a restaurant or cafe, and one in four people said they were annoyed by someone taking or making a call in the car.

Men are slightly more likely than women to object to mobile phone use and the most complaints recorded are in the London area, where the most mobile phones are. Sixty-nine per cent of those asked in the survey say there should be a ban on the use of the phones in cars and 42 and 36 per cent for buses and trains respectively. Restaurants are seen as off limits by 40 per cent and a quarter want the phones barred from pubs, too.

Andrew Fryatt, managing director of Tandy, said: "Mobile phones can be a real boon for many people, but they are also a potential source of annoyance."

TOURIST RATES

Australia (dollars)	2.41	Italy (lira)	2,798
Austria (schillings)	19.97	Japan (yen)	212.67
Belgium (francs)	58.71	Malta (lira)	0.62
Canada (\$)	2.30	Netherlands (guilders)	3.20
Cyprus (pounds)	0.83	Norway (kroner)	11.69
Denmark (kroner)	10.89	Portugal (escudos)	289.98
France (francs)	9.50	Spain (pesetas)	239.57
Germany (marks)	2.85	Sweden (kroner)	12.56
Greece (drachmas)	450.42	Switzerland (francs)	2.31
Hong Kong (\$)	0.44	Turkey (lira)	320.640
Ireland (pounds)	1.09	USA (\$)	1.61

Source: Thomson Guide
Rates for information purposes only

Woodward judge honoured for 'brave' decision to free convicted nanny

Judge Hiller Zobel likes the media, but when he delivered the final coup de theatre in the Louise Woodward trial last month by letting her go, he vowed never to talk about it publicly. He may find the resolution hard to keep.

On Thursday night, the 65-year-old judge found himself under the glare of the lights as he received an unexpected award. It was the Annual Brass Gavel Award given by the Plymouth County Bar Association in Massachusetts.

The award is bestowed on a single judge each year considered to have demonstrated special courage in making a decision on the bench. Three guesses what the tricky decision was in this instance.

It was on 10 November that Judge Zobel stunned the legal world - and giant television audiences on both sides of the Atlantic - by overruling the murder-in-the-second-degree verdict delivered by the jury in the trial of British nanny Louise Wood-

ward ten days earlier. Not only that, but having slashed the verdict to one of manslaughter, Judge Zobel set Woodward free on time already served of 279 days. The murder conviction carried a mandatory sentence of at least 15 years without parole.

"I am honoured and humbled to be here and to feel the warmth of your reception," Judge Zobel told his hosts at the prize ceremony.

"You know, judging is a funny business. You are expected to be perfect the first day on the job and to improve consistently thereafter. And it's true that we have to make difficult decisions."

Who was surely not celebrating the Bar Association's generosity? Debbie and Sunil Eappen, the parents of eight-month-old Matthew Eappen who died while in the care of Woodward last February.

— David Usborne, New York

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BBC

How a spark in a Burger King led to national chaos

The world's busiest international airport was last night starting to return to normal after a day of chaos caused by a fire. Randeep Ramesh and Kim Sengupta report the drama at Heathrow.

It probably started with a spark in a clogged air vent above Burger King's kitchens. Within seconds, flames were licking their way along the web of air ducts in the terminal's roof. In scenes reminiscent of a disaster movie, flames leapt from the top of Terminal One. According to some witnesses, the arcs of fire flew "40 feet up in the air".

But a full-scale catastrophe was never realised. Less than 12 hours after the first alarm at 4.40am, the airport was running virtually normally. Of the 150 people - at least 40 of whom were passengers - who were in the terminal at the time, none were injured.

The airport's own fire crews and the London Fire Service arrived within five minutes of the blaze starting and more than 100 firefighters were involved in tackling the fire.

A British Airports Authority spokesman said the fire had been contained by a £1m fire-proof membrane in the terminal roof which had restricted the flames.

Graham Holgate, a Fire Service Divisional Officer, said: "The area of the fire was confined to 200 metres of ducting. Part of the roof was damaged and about 20 per cent of the roof plantroom there was also a certain amount of smoke damage."

Roger Cato, managing director for the British Airports Authority at Heathrow, said the incident would be closely studied "to see if any lessons can be learnt". He added: "It seems, however, that emergency plans we already have, coped adequately with this."

Last night, the cost was being measured not in financial losses but in the delays suffered by the thousands of passengers expecting to travel yesterday and the miles of clogged roads surrounding the airport.

In that sense, the devastation was very real. More than 300 flights to Terminal One, which handles domestic, Irish and European flights, had been cancelled or diverted, and thousands of passengers were jammed in Heathrow's three other terminals, 15 miles west of central London.

Dozens of incoming flights were diverted to Stansted, or

Southampton. British Airways, the worst affected airline had to cancel around 200 Terminal One flights, and only managed to resume flying yesterday afternoon. SAS, the Scandinavian airline, said 11 flights from Copenhagen, Denmark, were diverted and came back empty, the passengers either trapped at Heathrow or abandoning the trip.

Although the fire did not spread, there were still hour-long delays to departures from Terminals Two, Three and Four, while arrival delays varied.

During the morning, the police closed a vital road access tunnel - for three hours - linking the M4 to the airport and within 15 minutes a five-mile tailback developed.

"It was unfortunate timing for us as the tunnel was closed for at least an hour after 7.30 and this was when the staff were trying to come into work," said a spokesman for BAA.

British Airways said it cancelled three long-haul flights, to Tokyo, Los Angeles and San Francisco, because many passengers failed to show up, apparently caught in traffic jams that built up on the M4 and other roads leading to Heathrow.

When passengers were allowed back into the terminal after its reopening, there was little evidence of damage apart from slight smoke-staining to the ceiling. But fire service investigators said they believed equipment in the ceiling cavity may have been damaged.

Many passengers complained of a lack of help. Anthony Truman, 57, from Putney, south west London, who was trying to fly to Bilbao in Spain, said: "There is nothing coming up on the screens and I just don't know whether I'm queuing in vain. People are being polite but nobody knows anything."

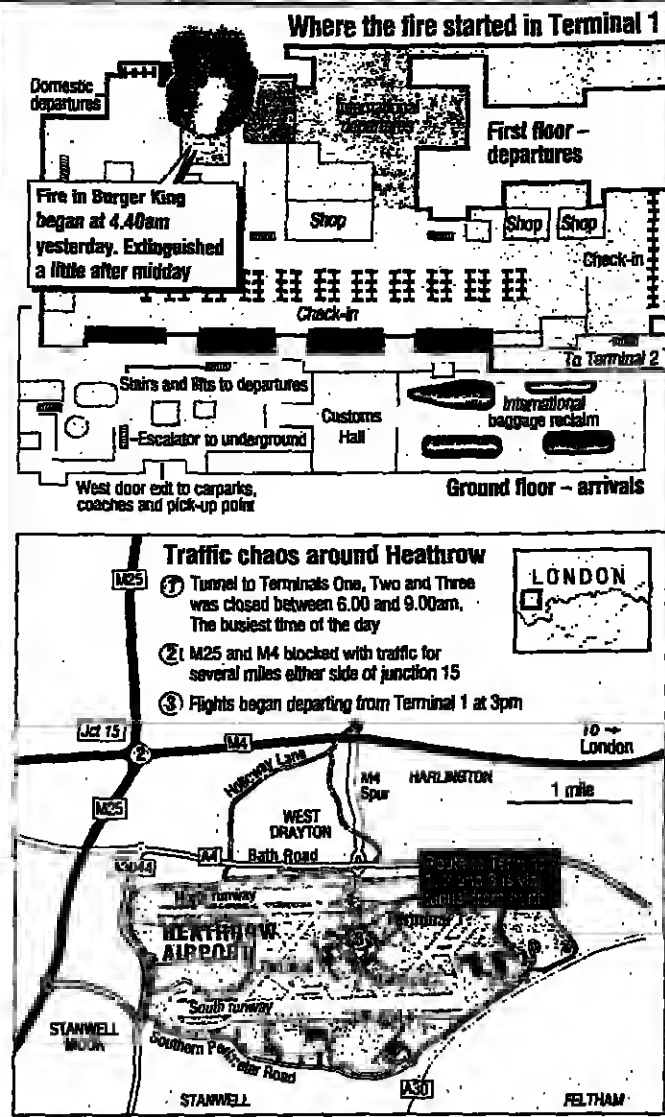
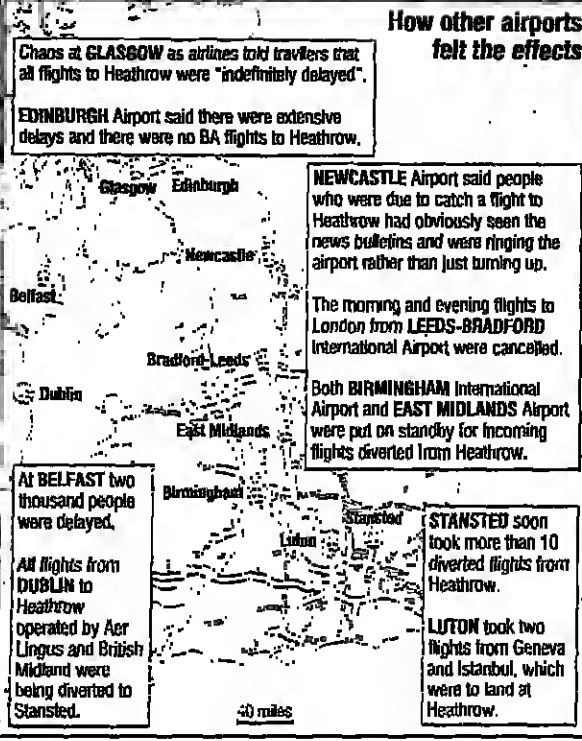
It could have been much worse. Around 70,000 people use Terminal One every day. "It was extremely fortunate that the fire was very early in the day. Two hours later the terminal would have been packed and there could have been a chaotic evacuation," said Professor Ed Galea, director of the fire safety engineering group at the University of Greenwich in south-east London.

It is estimated that the damage will run to hundreds of thousands of pounds. The London Fire Service and British Airports Authority will both conduct inquiries.

Leading article, page 20



GRAPHICS: KRISTINA FERRIS



HEATHROW NEARLY NORMAL

Passengers travelling on British Airways flights should face little or no difficulty at Heathrow over the weekend, the airline said last night.

BA is the biggest carrier out of Heathrow and runs about 70 per cent of the flights out of Terminal One. The airline is expected to run 240 incoming and outgoing flights today.

The airline has assured passengers that although there may be some "minor delays" in the morning, the service should be back to normal by midday.

Passengers with inquiries are advised to call especially set up national hot-line number 0345 222 111.

The minor delays in the morning, say BA, are due to the fact that around 100 incoming flights were cancelled yesterday. Although the incoming flights resumed at 3pm, the delay would have a "knock-on" effect on the early part of today.

British Midland, the second biggest carrier out of Terminal One, said that it would be running a normal service and even promised "additional services" to cope with the extra demand.

The other airlines operating from Heathrow also hope to have a full schedule of flights over the weekend.

BAA, owners of the airport, advised passengers to check with their airline before setting off for the airport.

Police watchdog to condemn Met over Lawrence murder inquiry

A report into police handling of the Stephen Lawrence murder will contain stinging criticism. Michael Sreeter, Legal Affairs Correspondent, says the inquiry into the stabbing of the black teenager will re-ignite a sensitive subject with wide implications.



Stephen Lawrence: murdered in racist attack by white youths

The Police Complaints Authority report is certain to be controversial with its attack on the way the Metropolitan Police initially handled the murder of Stephen Lawrence.

While it is not expected to uphold the belief of the 18-year-old's family that racial prejudice underscored the police attitude, The Independent has learnt it will include trenchant attacks on the force's early reaction to the crime. Ministers will study it carefully for any evidence that some police forces and units are only paying lip service to good race relations practice.

The teenager was stabbed to death at a bus shelter in Eltham, south-east London, four years ago by a gang of white youths. Last year the Lawrence family brought an unsuccessful private prosecution against five white youths.

The PCA investigation was carried out by the Deputy Chief Constable of Kent,

Straw, the Home Secretary. Unusually for a PCA inquiry the entire report, and not just its conclusions, will be published.

The findings will be used to help the public inquiry ordered by Mr Straw and to be conducted by Sir William Macpherson of Cluay, which will start in February.

Stephen's parents, Neville and Doreen Lawrence, have been deeply unhappy about the early police attitude towards their son's murder. Mrs Lawrence said earlier this year: "Shock and the horror just wasn't there. They gave us the impression that they believed black families are always into crime. It has made Stephen's killing even more unbearable."

The evidence given at the public inquiry, including any given by his killers, cannot be used in a criminal prosecution. In some cases witnesses may also be allowed to remain anonymous. Though this may mean there will never be a successful prosecution of Stephen's killers, it will at least mean that the full story of how - and why - he died and why his murderers escaped justice can be discovered.

In February an inquest in Southwark, south London, found that the student was unlawfully killed in an "unprovoked racist attack" by five white youths.

At the time family lawyers said they would take civil action against any officers found negligent by the PCA report.

IN MONDAY'S INDEPENDENT



INTERVIEW
Deborah Ross
feels the spirit of Christmas with Britt Eckland



SPORT
Chris Wright,
the owner of QPR and Wasps, tells of his first year as a sporting entrepreneur

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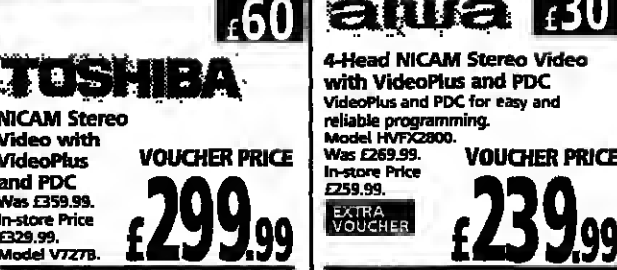
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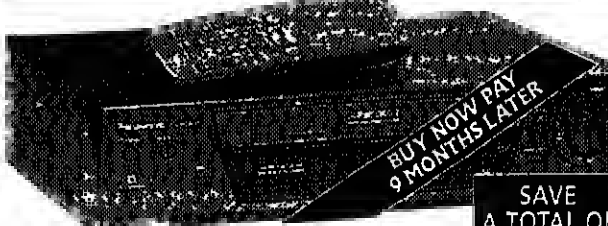


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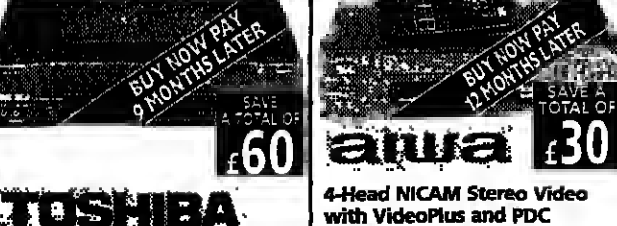


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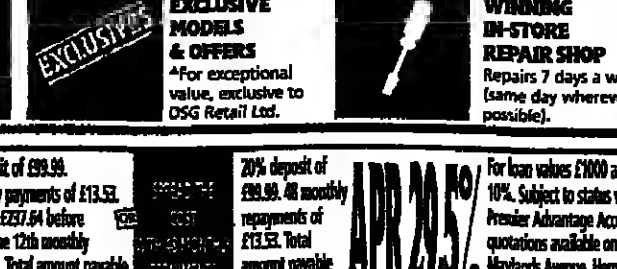
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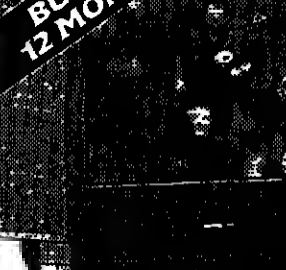
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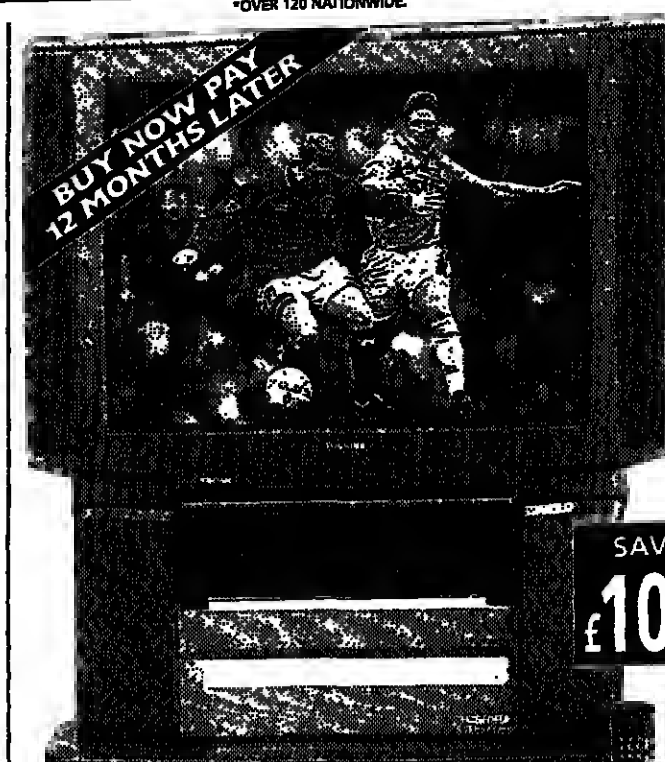
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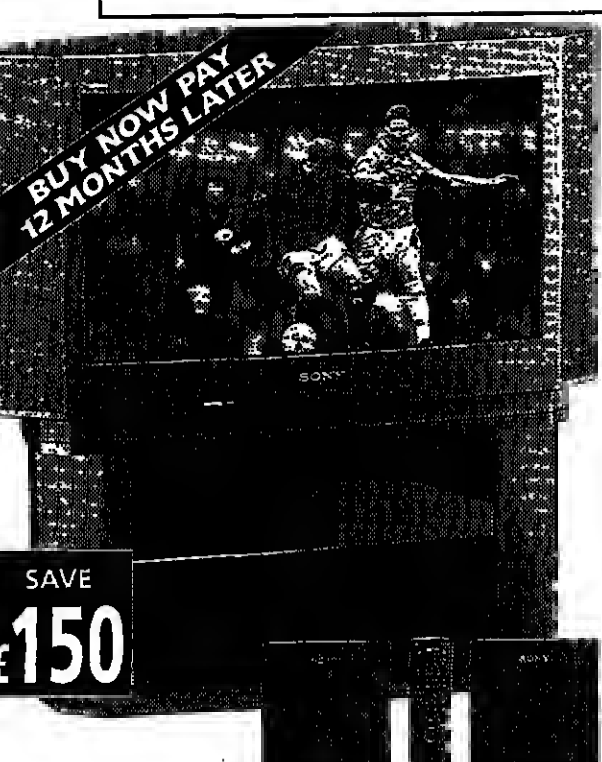
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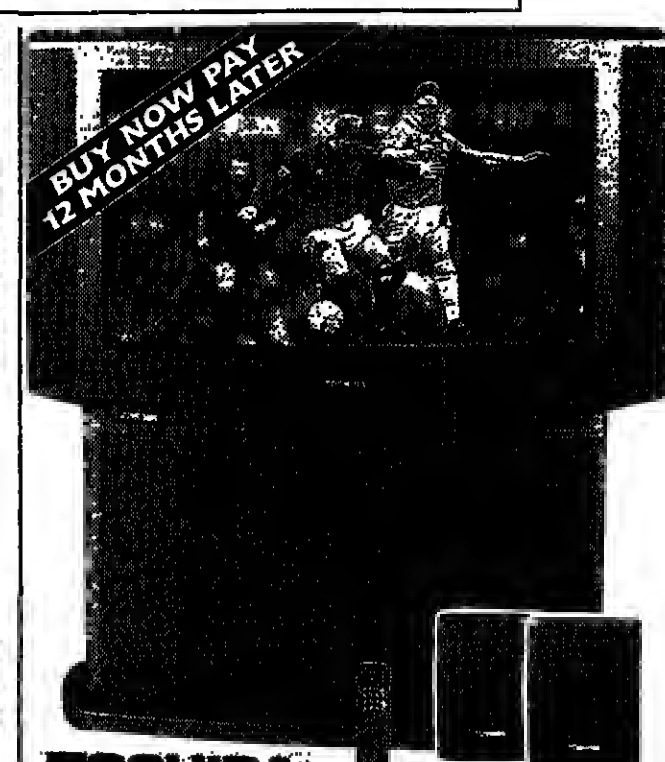
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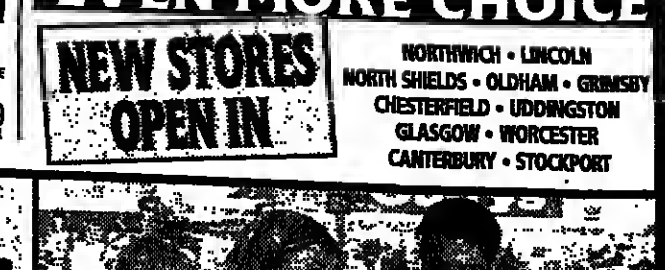
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5/CHRISTMAS

Firms delight in glow of party success

For an increasing number of companies the party season means a lot more than warm white wine, bowls of peanuts and a grope in the stationary cupboard. Paul McCann seeks out the people who make sure your party is one to remember.

In the early hours of this morning bleary-eyed bankers and their clients staggered out of the Park Lane Hilton after a Christmas party that has become a byword in the City for fun and excess.

The host was Mitsubishi Finance which supplied its 500 guests with a three-course meal before turning the hotel into a casino. Dancing followed, and at midnight the party became a breakfast bar and anyone who wanted it could have a full cooked breakfast.

When the partygoers wanted to leave, taxis and chauffeurs were on hand to take them wherever they wanted to go.

The signal Mitsubishi is sending out is that it is a success. That it is fun and that it knows how to throw a party.

Such is the demand for a party that will say something about your company and outdo your rivals that professional party organisers are mushrooming like no time since the Eighties.

"Business is booming," says Nigel Peters of party producers Peters and Beech. "And it's not just quantity, its quality." As an example, Mr Peters cites how fashion house Prada this year recreated the swish Soho restaurant Quo Vadis in the midst of a party for 2,000 people. The waiters would take reservations for different times during the party and serve up authentic Quo Vadis food.

"You need to spend between £100,000 and £200,000 to really get your company talked about," says Sara Blonstein who has produced parties for Channel 4 and Selfridges.

For Benetton, she had 20 rainbow-dyed sheep arrive in pink Cadillacs; for Channel 4, she created a post-apocalypse landscape inside Battersea Power Station; and for Selfridges,

she recreated a Busby Berkeley dance routine on a four-floor escalator using 150 dancers and actresses in full costume.

Other memorable parties this year included Channel 5's £100,000 bash where 1,100 guests were entertained by eight bands on two stages. They were filled with sausages and mash, vodka and cranberry cocktails and if they got bored they could watch any one of a dozen specially created peepshows.

These contained S&M shows, bikini-clad dancing girls and one where guests could try to wash the body paint off a model using water pistols.

Danielle Ney, who has responsibility at Channel 5 for its parties, believes they pay they own way. "We had a big party before the Channel launched to which we invited Warner Brothers. They were wary of signing a film deal with us. After they saw the party they saw that we were a major player. That we were exciting and fresh and after the party they wanted to do business with us. The advertising agencies that came were increasing their forecast of the money we would take - after the



Flat out: some Christmas parties are being used by firms to signal their success

Photograph: Brian Harris

Yorkshire heads Christmas spending

An average £654 per person will be spent on food, presents and entertainment this Christmas, it was claimed yesterday. Stephen Goodwin looks at two surveys which show consumers in a buoyant mood but wary of borrowing.

All those jokes about Yorkshire parsimony - the deep pockets and short arms - are not true after all. The Tykes spend more money on Christmas than anyone else in Britain.

According to research by NOP for the investment group Save and Prosper, some 41 per cent of Yorkshire folk will spend more than £500 this Christmas compared to 32 per cent for the population as a whole.

The finding is at least partially confirmed by the latest

American Express Consumer Spending Report. Though the geographical area and sums are bigger, Amex found "Northerners" to be the big festive spenders, expecting to splash out an average of £671 on food, gifts and entertaining, compared with a national average of £654. NOP put the average at £568.90.

However, where the surveys really disagree is over who spends least. "The West Country are the real Scrooges, with 81 per cent spending under £500," concluded NOP.

Not so, said Amex. In a finding that will give deep satisfaction to Northerners, the card company figured the people of the affluent South-east as the meanest. Consumers there expect to spend an average of £607 on food, gifts and entertaining.

The inhabitants of the most well-heeled corner of the country spend an average £367 on Christmas presents compared to a national average of £378.

They are also more likely to leave shopping until the last minute.

Overall, the Amex report, conducted by British Market Research Bureau International, found consumers feeling more confident about their economic situation. Three quarters of the 767 adults surveyed said they were well or better off compared to last year and 40 per cent expected their financial situation to improve in the next 12 months.

However, consumers seem to be adopting a careful, rather than a carefree approach to spending. The recession of the early 1990s lingers in the public mind, perhaps refreshed by recent interest rate rises. Some 85 per cent said they would only buy what they could afford and 72 per cent said they would rather do without than take a loan.

"What we are seeing as the festive season approaches is a new consumer mindset," said

Cary Cooper, professor of psychology at University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology.

"The Brits who are working longer and harder than anywhere else in Europe see Christmas as a time to reward themselves for their hard work throughout the year."

"But although there is a growing sense of confidence in the UK... there is still a strong element of careful spending. This is in contrast with the late Eighties where the spend-spend-spend culture prevailed," the professor said.

Not content with stoking divisions between the regions, the Amex report also found a gender gap in spending. Whether out of generosity or extravagance, men claim to spend on average £150 more over Christmas than women. One in 10 men expect to spend more than £1,000 on gifts alone - and presumably a high proportion of them are in Yorkshire.

A nation taking hangovers to work

Do you hang over your desk at work with a thumping head and a mouth like a badger's hindquarters? Has your boss been lurching around the office with bloodshot eyes and foul breath? It's part of a trend, says Barrie Clement: hangovers are costing British industry about eight million lost days a year.

From the boardroom to the shopfloor, people seem to be taking to alcohol to relieve increasing stress at work, with professional employees outdrinking more junior staffers.

An NOP survey published today shows that nearly 60 per cent of "middle

class" employees regularly drink to help them relax, compared to around 45 per cent of all workers.

But with Christmas looming, researchers found that most employees are in denial over the effects of alcohol.

A "staggering" 39 per cent of British males admitted they had felt ill at work due to too much drink the previous day, they discovered. Some 18 per cent admitted taking time off because they were incapable of turning up. However, 79 per cent claimed that in the run-up to Christmas, alcohol "does not in any way" affect their performance.

The poll, conducted on behalf of Guardian Employee Benefits, which offers insurance to companies for absence, showed that nearly a quarter of offices allow drinking on the premises on some occasions throughout the year. Two-thirds of

workplaces had no policy on alcohol abuse, nor offer counselling to those who abuse drink.

Brian Rawle, marketing manager of the insurance company, said it was clear that staff were sometimes incapacitated by drink and that it not only affected their own performance, but that of others.

After a long period of "downsizing", which had affected most parts of industry, companies expected people to work to full capacity: alcohol impaired their ability to do so. It was not a question of being a "killjoy" before Christmas or encouraging managers to "sp". Mr Rawle attacked the "blinking" attitude of many employers to the damaging impact of alcohol. He pointed out that the Health Education Authority estimated that problem drinking was costing British industry more than £1bn a year.



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7/US v GATES

THE INDEPENDENT
SATURDAY 13 DECEMBER 1997
7

Microsoft given bloody nose by browser monopoly ruling

Bill Gates and his computer software giant, Microsoft, put on a brave face yesterday after a US judge ruled that the company had unfairly exploited the virtual monopoly enjoyed by its Windows 95 system and instructed an immediate change in marketing practices. But while the short-term cost to Microsoft is limited, the long-term damage to the reputation of Mr Gates may be more severe. Mary Dejevsky reports.

The US government had brought the case against Microsoft, claiming that the company had broken the terms of a two-year old legal agreement designed to preserve open competition in the US software market. Late on Thursday, several weeks earlier than expected, the judge, Thomas Penfield Jackson, announced his verdict: a 90 per cent victory for the government - and a corresponding defeat for Microsoft.

The judge ruled that Microsoft "shall cease and desist ... from the practice of licensing the use of any Microsoft personal computer operating system software (including Windows 95 or any successor version thereof), on the condition that the computer manufacturer also install its browser software". In other words, Microsoft may not require computer-makers to accept Microsoft's browser, Internet Explorer as a condition for taking its Windows 95 operating programme.

The ruling is a preliminary one. The judge also appointed a specialist in the field, a law professor, Lawrence Lessig, to consider all the facts and report by 31 May.

The ruling that Microsoft may not link its two products in the interim, however, represents a further defeat for the company. Both Microsoft and its chief rival in the browser market, Netscape Communications Corp, with its Netscape Navigator, are set to compete for expiring licensing agreements in this period, and Netscape feared (and government lawyers argued) that Microsoft would try to crowd it out of the market. The vice-president of Netscape, Lori Mirek, said the decision restored a "level playing field" in the browser market

and would allow Netscape to compete to have its browser pre-installed by computer makers. A Microsoft spokesman said it believed the legal review would vindicate the company. "We're confident," he said, "that once the court has reviewed all the facts it will agree that Microsoft complied fully with the consent decree and that Microsoft's integration of Internet Explorer with Windows 95 is good for consumers."

The one consolation for Microsoft is that the judge denied the government's request that it be considered in contempt of the 1995 agreement. This could have made it liable for fines of up to \$1m a day.

The chairman of Microsoft, Bill Gates, was spreading his company's gospel in Peking when the ruling was announced and declined to comment beyond saying that the competition with Netscape would continue. "They'll have a new version, we'll have a new version. It's a healthy competition that you expect in the computer software market," he told his student audience. "It's not a business where anybody has a guaranteed position - even Microsoft, with all its success," he said, forecasting that speech-recognition was the next computer frontier. But the benevolent image of Mr Gates is probably gone for good.

This is the second ruling against the company recently - the first found in favour of Sun Microsystems, which had complained that Microsoft was unfairly using and altering its Java system for its own purposes. It prevents the company from fully exploiting the dominance of Windows during a crucial period. And it deprives Microsoft of its reputation as a new-style consumer-friendly company, an undoubted marketing asset in the past.

Yesterday some analysts predicted that Microsoft would have to delay the launch of its new version of Windows, expected in mid-1998, because it had planned to integrate the browser.

For the US government, the head of the Justice Department's anti-trust division, Joel Klein, said consumer choice had been established. "No consumer should be denied the browser of its choice because Microsoft made their computer vendor an offer that their vendor couldn't refuse."

Shares in Microsoft Corp fell by 1.31 dollars to 137.75 in early trading in New York yesterday - less than some had predicted - while Netscape gained 2.50 to 28.75.



Clubbing together: Bill Gates and President Bill Clinton in happier times

Photograph: Jim Bourg/Gamma Liaison

Winning the war of the Web

Microsoft's aim for almost two years has been to use the dominance of its Windows operating system - a set of interlocking programs which enable a PC to run word-processing programs, spreadsheets or databases - to jump-start the market share of Internet Explorer (IE), its browsing program for viewing the World Wide Web, discussion areas and for sending e-mail.

Its chief rival, which was on the scene rather earlier, is Navigator, from Netscape Corporation of Mountain View, California. Netscape's lead of 18 months or so meant that by the time Microsoft had a usable browser, Netscape had an 80 per cent share of the small, but fast-growing market.

Why does a browser matter? First, it is the main tool for "surfing the Web" - moving between Web sites. If the Internet becomes the centre for electronic commerce that everyone claims it will, then it must be good if a browser is used to carry out that business.

Secondly, any software has "defaults" - the settings of parts of the program as it starts up. In a browser, a key one is the "Home page" - where the program takes you when it starts up. If lots of people visit your home page simply because they start the program, you can charge more to advertisers who buy space there. Many people never realise that they can change the default in seconds. So whenever they start the program, they are delivered to the site.

Navigator's default home page is the Netscape Web site; that of IE, the Microsoft site. So far, so fair.

But peoples' tendency to stick with defaults also extends to the software on their machine. If your machine already has a browser, would you bother to get another? So Microsoft began issuing a simple ultimatum to PC manufacturers: include IE as standard software on your machine, or you can't have Windows 95. Without Windows 95, their machines would have no operating system - and so would be useless to the average user. They agreed to Bill Gates's demands.

Netscape's market share began falling dramatically, and the number of "hits" on Microsoft's home page began rocketing. Netscape cried foul. Microsoft responded that IE was "part of the operating system". This seemed odd, since it doesn't sell or market any other part of its operating system separately. Microsoft's argument looked thin; its tactics, vicious. The decision means that some equality will now be restored.

— Charles Arthur, Science Editor

Why it is important that a judge put brakes on cyber-juggernaut

Everywhere you look, Microsoft is there. Its software operates 94 per cent of all personal computers sold today. It has four-fifths of the market for word-processing programmes. It is dominant in new sales of software for running computer networks in companies. It has invested in cable, multimedia, on-line commerce and movie-making. Bill Gates, chairman and founder of the computer software giant, is even invading outer space with a plan to launch nearly 300 low-orbit satellites that will beam Internet communications around the world.

This is why the ruling by a United States judge, that Microsoft has abused its monopoly power in one area, is so significant. This could be the first time that competi-

tion law will manage to prevent the company from gaining dominance in one of its target markets.

The US has had tougher legislation than the UK against the abuse of monopolies ever since John D Rockefeller grew over-mighty with Standard Oil. The American admiration for big business has a limit. The once-dominant IBM lost a lengthy anti-trust case in the early Eighties. It was competition policy, too, that broke up telephone company AT&T into regional companies, and opened the long-distance phone market to competitors like MCI and Sprint.

The US machinery puts Britain's feeble safeguards against powerful monopolies to shame.

The question is whether the new ruling will succeed in preventing Microsoft from eliminating consumer choice in areas where it is not yet dominant. The Internet

BY DIANE COYLE

is a crucial unconquered territory, and one Bill Gates desperately wants to dominate. Microsoft's "Explorer" browser for accessing the Internet had rapidly caught up

with the main alternative, Netscape, and threatened to corner the market for the software that helps people find their way around the Internet. Microsoft is already a big provider of Internet communications, after America Online. And Bill Gates has invested heavily in the content of what people might want to access, with the creation of an on-line magazine, investment in a film company, and, through the purchase of digital rights, to images of paintings in the National Gallery and the Hermitage Museum, the notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci, and a 16-million image photographic library.

Microsoft also faces a more crucial legal case. Sun Microsystems, another software company, accuses it of breaching its

licence to use Sun's Java computer language. Java is crucial to preserving competition. It is a programming language created specifically to be used with any kind of computer operating system or software, and is making wildfire gains in the business computing market. With Java, you can use Windows alongside any other software. It is a kind of hi-tech glue.

Sun charges that Microsoft has altered Java, which it uses in the latest version of its Internet Explorer, in such a way that this essential compatibility with other software would not work. Microsoft has counter-sued Sun. The outcome of this battle will be just as important as the Internet browser war.



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Firefighters failed to spot murder victim in burned-out car

An investigation has been ordered after firefighters who doused a blazing car failed to spot a dead man lying on the rear seat. The body was discovered 15 hours later by two teenagers.

Officers from the Hereford and Worcester Fire Brigade were called to the fire on Wednesday evening, but it was not until Thursday lunchtime that police were told about the body.

Detectives believe John Brosnan, 50, a father of three, was beaten to death before the black L-registered Ford Mondeo hatchback was set on fire in an isolated track. Police think he may have been the victim of an underworld revenge killing. A murder inquiry is underway.

The boys, aged 14 and 16, found the body when they went to examine the wreckage in Weatherock, Redditch. They told a farmer who raised the alarm.

West Mercia Police revealed that Mr Brosnan, who was unemployed, had been involved in armed robberies and served a jail sentence for

assault. Detectives believe he was still involved in criminal activities and they intend to quiz his underworld contacts who may hold the key to the murder.

Police are trying to piece together Mr Brosnan's movements after he left his partner, Anne Davis, at their home in Leamington Spa, Warwickshire at 10.45am on Wednesday, saying he intended to visit an acquaintance in Birmingham.

Firefighters were called out at 8.40pm on Wednesday to tackle a fire which wrecked his car. But police were only informed that a body had been found in the Mondeo on Thursday lunchtime.

"Mr Brosnan was given a vicious and ferocious beating which quite clearly led to his death," said Detective Superintendent Ian Johnston, who is leading the murder hunt.

"He had extensive bruising to both sides of his jaw, his eyes and forehead and we are reasonably sure he was dead before the fire started."

"It's too early to speculate on whether this was a revenge attack. But Mr Brosnan is known to have been involved in

serious robbery offences.

"He has been involved with some well known active criminals throughout the Midlands. He was not a low level criminal."

"Quite clearly we have to bear his background in mind and that will be one of our lines of inquiry. We have to look at his associates to see if they give us any indications for the murder," Det Supt Johnston said.

"Mr Brosnan was not a man who always made his whereabouts known to his family," he added.

Detectives were carrying out house-to-house inquiries in Leamington Spa yesterday and police were still seeking to trace the acquaintance Mr Brosnan had intended to visit.

Det Supt Johnston said the murder inquiry had not been hampered by the fire brigade's failure to find his body.

"We may have expected that they could have found the body, yes," he said. "But I don't believe significant forensic evidence has been lost. Most of it was consumed by the fire anyway."

— Richard Smith



Cyberlove: Aki Maita, a 31-year-old Japanese housewife, holding Bandai's Tamagotchi - her own creations which took the children's toy world by storm; she is visiting the UK for the first time to introduce her latest pet, the space-travelling Tamagotchi Angel. Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

Master of 'Maria Asumpta' loses manslaughter appeal

The owner and master of the sailing ship *Maria Asumpta*, which sank off the north Cornwall coast in 1995 with the loss of three crew, yesterday failed in an appeal against his triple manslaughter conviction.

Three Court of Appeal judges said they were left in no "lurking doubt" about the safety of Mark Litchfield's conviction.

Litchfield, 56, who had been on bail pending appeal, was led away to serve the 18-month jail sentence imposed on him at Exeter Crown Court in August.

The rejection of his appeal was welcomed by relatives and friends of 22 people who have died on ships owned by Litchfield - three on the *Maria Asumpta* and 19 on the square rigged *Marques*, which sank off Bermuda 11 years earlier.

"It is heart's ease to see justice being done," said Shirley Cooklin, who lost her 18-year-old son Beo Bryant on the *Marques*.

After the judgment, Suzie Macfarlane, who lost her 19-year-old daughter Emily on the *Maria Asumpta*, said: "I'm extremely glad it's all over - the saga has ended."

Ms Cooklin said: "It's been a tremendous strain to sit through and then to have to wait for the judgment. But I've waited 13 years for some sort of retribution. Twenty-two people have died. My fear was there would be further deaths."

Lord Justice Simon Brown, Mr Justice Roulger and Mr Justice Auld dismissed argument by Litchfield's lawyers that allegations that he was grossly negligent and in breach of his duty of care towards his crew were not supported by the

evidence and should never have gone before the jury.

The Crown had alleged that Litchfield set a dangerous course before the 137-year-old vessel was driven towards treacherous rocks off Padstow, forcing him to rely on his engines which he knew to be fuelled by contaminated diesel.

The engines failed and Litchfield could not steer out of trouble. His ship broke up on rocks at Rumps Point.

Eleven survivors were rescued, but three people perished - ship's cook Anne Taylor, 50, from Wallingford, Oxfordshire; assistant bosun Emily Macfarlane, 19, of Felicitous, Suffolk; and John Shannon, 24, the second engineer, from Queensland, Australia.

The sinking in 1984 of the *Marques* did not result in criminal proceedings.

Cleveland detective put back in uniform

A detective in Cleveland police, where the policy of zero tolerance has attracted equal measure of praise and criticism, has been transferred to uniform duties, it was revealed yesterday.

Detective Sergeant John McPherson, 51, has been moved from Middlesbrough CID to duties "elsewhere" in the force, said a spokesman.

Earlier this month the head of Middlesbrough CID Detective, Superintendent Ray Mallon, seen as the architect of the new policing strategy, was suspended amid allegations of misconduct. He has strongly denied the claims. In October, two other detectives from the unit were suspended for allegedly supplying drugs to criminals in exchange for confessions.

The transfer of Mr McPherson, who had been with the CID for eight years and who has been a police officer for 31 years, is the first such move since Superintendent Adrian Roberts took over as boss of the CID unit this week.

The spokesman said: "A detective sergeant has been moved from Middlesbrough CID, following the launch of an inquiry by the force's complaints and discipline branch into allegations of discipline and potentially criminal conduct."

— Michael Streetier, Legal Affairs Correspondent

18 years' jail for sex abuse scoutmaster

A paedophile scoutmaster who attacked young boys in his care was yesterday jailed for 18 years after being convicted of a string of serious sexual assaults.

Judge Michael Mott described David Stanley as a "predatory and aggressive paedophile" who had preyed on "vulnerable" young boys during his time with the scouts and as a youth worker at a residential children's home. A jury at Worcester Crown Court convicted Stanley, 49, of Telford, Shropshire, of six counts of huggery, two of attempted buggery, eight counts of indecent assault, and one charge of possessing pornographic photographs with a view to distributing them on the Internet.

Timothy Barnes QC, for the defence, told the court the offences had taken place in the 1970s when Stanley was a young man in his twenties. He had since married and had enjoyed a respectable family life with his wife and two children, who had to hear the humiliation and distress of his conviction.

The offences were committed against boys aged between 10 and 15, who were either scouts or boys at a privately run care home called Cotsbrook Hall in Shifnal, Shropshire, where Stanley worked as a care assistant. The home was owned by the company responsible for the Bryn Alyn home in Wrexham, north Wales, whose owner John Allen was jailed for six years for paedophile offences.

Good old British cuppa gets a revamp in a can

The British idea of a relaxing cuppa could be changed for ever with the launch of tea in a tin yesterday.

Hot cups of tea, coffee and chocolate will be on sale alongside traditional cans after four years of research to develop them.

The idea initially came from Japan where tea and coffee have been sold in cans for a number of years. This sector of the market accounts for 70 per

cent of canned drink sales, dwarfing soft drinks.

The different types of drinks will be stored in hot cabinets which keep the cans at between 55-57°C - normal drinking temperature. Once heated, they should be drunk within seven days for "optimum quality".

The ring-pull cans are made from material similar to that of a soup can but are covered with polystyrene labels which keep the tea hot without turning the

hands. Both the tea and coffee come white.

Brooke Bond, who pioneered the drinks, said tea was the hardest drink to convert to can-form and eventually came up with a formula of freshly brewed PG Tips and milk powder.

The cans are being sold initially in the Greater Manchester area from the New Year.

Glendo Cooper, Consumer Affairs Correspondent

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Elite's fav

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Elite's favourite show takes the flak from politicians

Tensions between politicians and the BBC have always existed and Today has borne the brunt of the flak. Louise Jury looks at the love-hate relationship between the corporation's flagship news programme and governments.

Lord Tebbit once showed his irritation with the Today programme by arriving for an interview, pulling a duster from his pocket and waving it in front of the editor's face - just to dust off the bias, he joked.

And it was during the Thatcherite years of the Eighties that antagonism against the programme was at its height. Lord Tebbit, when Tory chairman, even set up a "bias monitoring" unit at Central Office to keep tabs on the BBC which he described as the "insufferable, smug, sanctimonious, naive, guilt-ridden, wet, pink orthodoxy of that sunset home of that third-rate decade, the 1960s".

John Humphrys may be

Labour's hate figure now, but it was the late Brian Redhead who angered the Tories most in those days. In one of the most memorable exchanges on radio, the then Chancellor, Nigel Lawson, lost his temper under questioning over the economy and accused the broadcaster of being a life-long Labour supporter. Mr Redhead asked for a minute's silence "while you compose an apology for daring to suggest you know how I exercise my vote; and I shall reflect upon the death of your monetarist policy".

More recently, John Birt, the BBC's director-general, apologised to Brian Mawhinney, then Tory party chairman, after he complained that Kenneth Clarke, then Chancellor, was treated in an "openly hostile" way by Anna Ford last year.

Mr Humphrys, though, is the presenter who most frequently rattles guests today. Jonathan Aitken, the former MP, accused him of being an openly "partisan pugilist" and condemned the BBC as being the "Blair Broadcasting Corporation". For more than a decade, he has irritated and goaded politicians. Yet despite tense re-

lations, it is a rash politician who feels able to relinquish air time to the political enemy. Any "ban" would be unlikely to last long.

Although the Labour Party recently suggested that the Prime Minister was less dedicated to Today than most politicians, the programme remains an acknowledged agenda-setter.

Yesterday, the BBC was keen to point out that despite Labour's threat to withdraw co-operation, Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, was interviewed on Thursday morning and Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, yesterday. However, BBC's Newsnight has had to fight to get ministers to appear since the election. During the Bernie Ecclestone/smoking row, no minister would appear. When this happened for a fourth night, the programme showed an empty chair in the studio.

A source at the programme said: "The Tories used to almost always put a minister up. There is no doubt that Labour try to kill the stories. They do interviews up until lunchtime and then say, 'No more,' in the hope that we'll drop the story. But we're normally pretty determined that we can't be stopped."

Harsh words in exchange of letters

Edited extracts from the exchange of letters between David Hill and John Barton.

Dear John, The John Humphrys problem has assumed new proportions after this morning's interview with Harriet Harman. In response we have had a council of war and are now seriously considering whether, as a party, we will suspend co-operation when you make bids through us for Government ministers. Individual Government Departments will continue to make their own minds up but we will now give very careful thought to any bid to us, in order to make absolutely sure that your listeners are not going to be subjected to a repeat of the ridiculous exchange this morning.

Harriet Harman was keen to be interviewed this morning... in the knowledge that she would be challenged on the wisdom of the Government's decision... In the event this failed to happen. Humphrys interrupted so much that she was never permitted to develop a single answer.

Frankly, none of us feel that this can go on... I am sure your listeners don't want it. We can see no benefit to us... We need to talk as this is now serious.

Yours,

David Hill.

Dear David, Thank you for being so frank in your letter of complaint about John Humphrys' interview with Harriet Harman... Your description of it as "a ridiculous exchange" surprised me...

John was... seeking a direct answer to a simple question: were the cuts forced on the Government by financial necessity or because the Secretary of State believed that they were desirable in themselves?

I disagree with your suggestion that Ms Harman "was never permitted to develop a single answer".

Her first answer for instance was almost one minute long, and later she explained at length the Government's strategy for helping lone parents to return to work.

We would obviously be very sorry if you decided to "suspend co-operation"... The losers would be the listeners.

Yours sincerely,

Jon Barton
Editor, Today



John Humphrys playing the cello. Politicians clearly think he should spend more time on his music, and less in the BBC's Today studio
Photograph: Jim Selby

Harriet Harman interview at heart of controversy

The interview at the centre of the controversy ran for almost five minutes on Wednesday morning. Harriet Harman was pressed by John Humphrys to say whether the lone-parent benefit cut was designed to force single mothers into work. The Secretary of State for Social Security refused to answer the question at least four times and during the exchanges Mr Humphrys interrupted her several times and talked over her.

This is part of the interview. John Humphrys: "There are many women in this country who have children under the age of five and who do not want to work. Are you saying to them 'we think you ought to work'?"

Harriet Harman: "There are many women with children under five who want to work and who lack affordable, high-quality child care."

Humphrys: "I am talking about those who don't want to work and I am asking you the question, are you saying to them 'Ultimately it is our aim to get people like you into work.' Is that what you are saying? It is a very straightforward question."

Harman: "Well, I am giving you a very straightforward answer, John, which is that we are for the first time offering those lone mothers with children under five."

Humphrys: "No, you are not answering the question, with the greatest of respect. You are answering your question. I am asking you to answer my question."

"Do you want these women... you talk about ending a dependency culture, are you saying to women with young children who are living by themselves, we

would like you to work? Is that what you are saying?"

Harman: "I am saying I would like for those women what they want for themselves and that means choice."

Humphrys: "Hang on, what they want, for many of them is you not to impose the cuts you are imposing to them."

Harman: "They have had no choice in the past, because they have been given no help to work. The question is whether we invest £5 a week extra to help them on benefits, or whether we invest in helping them into work. And if they don't get into work, they will have that choice and they will get the same level of benefit for their child as married women will get."

"I know we will look back



Harman: Under pressure

on this and think how odd it was we were championing the rights of lone mothers to bring up their children on benefit. It's hard to bring up your children on benefit. It's easier if you can do part-time work, or even full-time work, and actually have a better standard of living, and that's the direction in which we are going."

Humphrys: "Harriet Harman, thank you very much."

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Eta shooting deals blow to hopes of end to Basque war

Basque separatists from Eta are being blamed for the fatal shooting of a conservative town councillor. Elizabeth Nash in Madrid says the killing has dealt a crushing blow to tentative hopes of bringing an end to Eta's violent campaign.

A masked gunman shot dead Jose Luis Caso on Thursday night, while he was drinking wine with friends in a bar in Irun near the French border.

The shooting held cruel echoes of a killing in July that brought millions of Spaniards on to the streets in protest. Mr Caso, 64, a member of the ruling right-of-centre Popular Party (PP), had received threats of "you are next" just days after Eta killed Miguel Angel Blanco in the summer. But he had refused the government's offer to give him bodyguards. "I am not afraid. If they want to come for me they know where to find me," he said recently.

Eta, which stands for Basque

Homeland and Freedom, has killed more than 800 people in a 29-year campaign for an independent Basque state. Caso was the 13th victim this year.

Jaime Mayor Oreja, the interior minister, condemned the shooting as a "revenge attack following recent setbacks". A similar attack last week on a PP councillor from San Sebastian was foiled by her bodyguard who was shot in the face and lost an eye.

Basque pacifist organisations called for protest vigils last night, and all Basque democratic parties called for a mass demonstration in San Sebastian this evening.

Mr Mayor Oreja flew to Irun to join the family of Mr Caso, a retired shipyard welder and councillor for the industrial suburb of Renteria since 1995. The Spanish Prime Minister, Jose Maria Aznar, attending a European Union summit in Luxembourg, insisted that the government would not back down in its fight against the separatist guerrillas. Mr Aznar was expected to attend the funeral today.

The conservative Basque

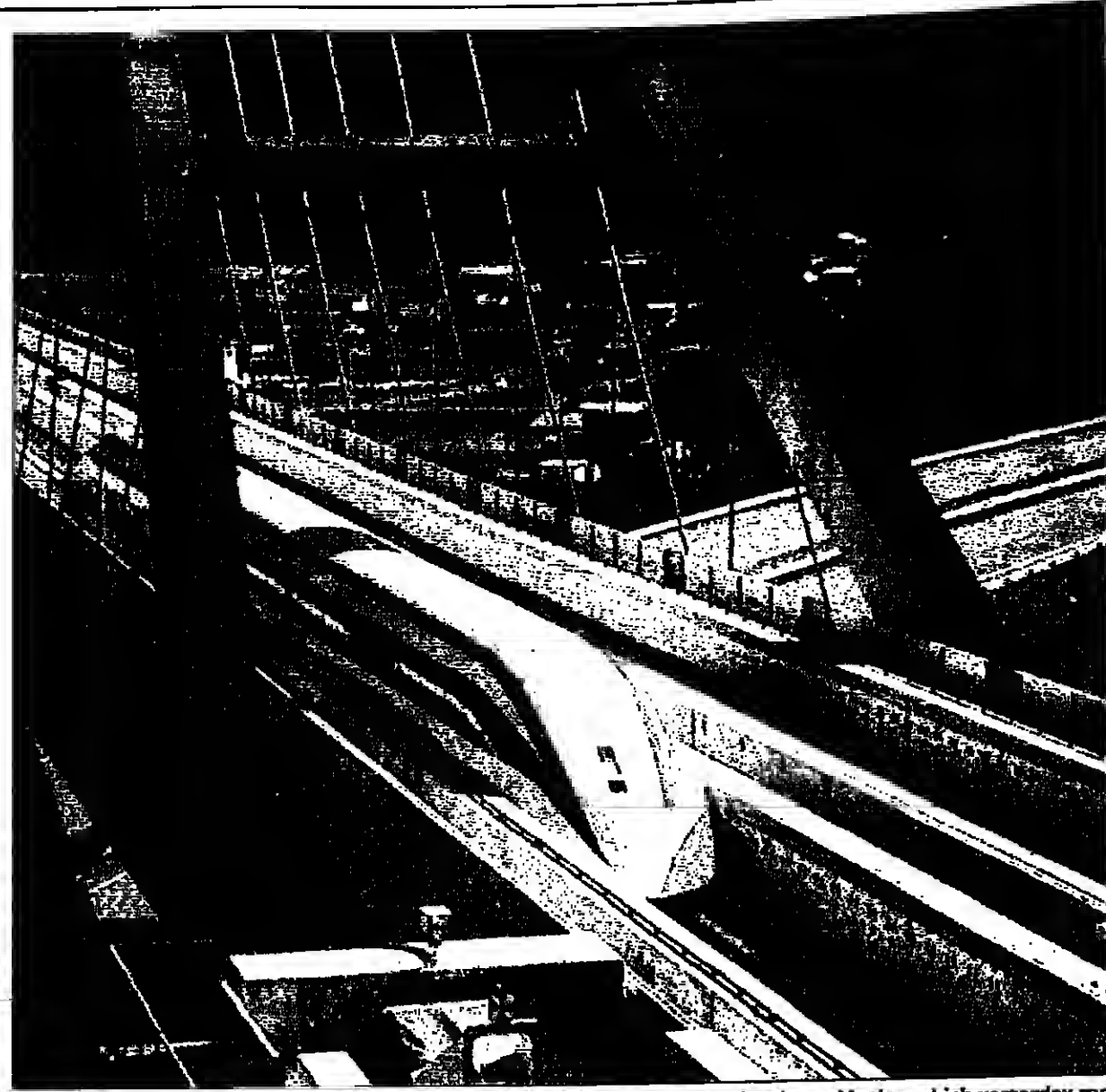
nationalist leader Antonio Ardanza, who has long urged dialogue with the separatists, said the attack "was a cynical kick in the teeth for all those seeking a negotiated solution". Faint signs indicate that even the pro-Eta Herri Batasuna party may be divided over Eta's action. In a rare breaking of ranks, Herri Batasuna's lawyer, Pabli Zabaleta, condemned the killing as "unjustified".

Last week the Supreme Court jailed all 23 leaders of Herri Batasuna for eight years for collaborating with terrorists, prompting their spokesman to warn of "grave and direct consequences".

Yesterday's killing appears to have dashed hopes for an early ceasefire raised when Eta announced a semi-truce last month.

The government last week agreed to transfer 16 Eta prisoners held far from the Basque country to jails nearer home, which partly meets one of Eta's principal demands.

A proposed general strike called by Herri Batasuna for Monday was yesterday called off.



Silver streak: A unmanned prototype of the Japanese magnetically levitated train, or Maglev, which yesterday ran at 321 mph, breaking the world speed record for trains - set by the French TGV - by 1 mph. Photograph: AP

Cemetery war ends with widows' peace

Two widows, one Jewish and one Muslim, who had been fighting in court over who would bury their shared husband, decided on a compromise yesterday.

Shuakat Kuza, a Muslim who converted to Judaism and back to Islam, will be buried in the Muslim section but near the Jewish side of a cemetery in Haifa where the Jewish widow lives. There will be two separate burial ceremonies, one Jewish and one Muslim, Israeli television reported.

Kuza had converted to Judaism in 1994, taken a Hebrew name and married his Jewish partner of 30 years. But three days after he married her in November 1995, he went to an Islamic court in Hebron and converted back to Islam and married a Muslim woman, without ever divorcing his Jewish wife. Muslims are allowed to marry up to four women.

After Kuza died recently of heart failure, each wife demanded to be allowed to bury him according to her religion and on Thursday took the case to the Supreme Court. The court had planned to rule on the case in the coming days but Israeli television said the women reached the compromise on their own.

— AP, Jerusalem

Rwanda massacre survivors tell of machete horror

Survivors of an attack on a camp in north-western Rwanda in which 271 people were killed said Hutu rebels came at night and started chopping up their victims.

The ethnic Tutsi refugees from the neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo were killed at Mudende camp, about 120 km (75 miles) north-west of Kigali, when it was attacked on Wednesday night by Hutu militiamen armed with rifles, grenades and machetes, according to a senior army official.

A total of 271 people were killed in the attack and 227 were wounded, said Colonel Nyamwasa Kayumba.

Yesterday morning survivors were burying the dead - mostly women and children and

most hearing horrific wounds - just yards from the tents in which they were slaughtered.

One survivor, whose son was hacked to death, said: "They came very quietly while we were sleeping and we had no chance to escape. They just started chopping, chopping, chopping."

The UN refugee chief, Sadako Ogata, strongly condemned the attack and a spokeswoman called the attackers merciless.

The US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, told a news conference in Congo that she was asking US war crimes envoy David Scheffer to go to Rwanda to assist in the investigation of the massacre.

Mr Scheffer, who has been

accompanying Mrs Albright on a seven-nation African tour, had been asked to go back to Rwanda, to try to assist in the probe of the killings.

Mrs Albright, the most senior US official to visit Rwanda since a genocide in 1994, has condemned a recent upsurge of violence in the country connected with the return from Congo of hundreds of thousands of Hutu refugees who fled their country in 1994, fearing reprisals for the genocide. Some 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus died in Rwanda in 1994 during a genocide by extremist Hutu militia and members of the former government and army. Rwanda's government fought its way to power during the genocide. Reuters, Mudende

Swiss order return of Marcos millions

The Swiss Supreme Court ruled yesterday that assets belonging to late Filipino dictator Ferdinand Marcos should be returned to the Philippines. The ruling related specifically to \$100m (£62m) of approximately \$500m that have been frozen in Swiss bank accounts since Marcos was ousted in 1986. Imelda Marcos, who is in the United States for eye treatment, could not be immediately reached for comment.

— AP, Zurich

Suu Kyi aide 'quits'

One of the two chief aides to Burma's democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi has resigned from her party, the military government said. Kyi Maung, vice chairman of the National League for Democracy, and one of Suu Kyi's most trusted lieutenants, resigned from the party because of conflicts with the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize winner, a press release from the government said.

— AP, Rangoon

Wolf hunt ban

Poland's government announced plans to ban wolf hunting for three years. The main impact will be in the forested south-eastern province of Krosno, which last season controversially gave hunters permission to shoot about 70 wolves from a population of more than 200.

— Reuters, Warsaw

Karadzic's party wins most seats

The party loyal to war-crimes suspect Radovan Karadzic won the most seats in Bosnian Serb elections but lost its all-out majority. The pro-Karadzic Serbian Democratic Party won 24 of 83 seats. The Serbian Radical Party, its most likely ally, tied in third place with Biljana Plavsic's Serbian National Alliance, at 15 seats each. Second was the Muslim-dominated Coalition for Bosnia-Herzegovina, with 16 seats, mainly from refugees' absentee votes.

— AP, Banja Luka

Mauritania votes

Mauritania went to the polls yesterday to elect a new president but, with the main opposition boycotting the vote and President Maouiya Ould Sid Ahmed Taya almost sure to win, early turnout was low. Mr Taya, who took power in a bloodless coup in 1984, faces four rivals, including the first black African to run for the job.

— Reuters, Nouakchott

Lesbian priest row

Norway's only female bishop yesterday dodged a decision on sacking a female priest who defied church rules by "marrying" her lesbian lover. Bishop Rosemarie Koehn of Norway's state Protestant church gave Siri Sundt, who was suspended earlier this year, an extension of leave that was due to expire yesterday.

— Reuters, Oslo

Russia grounds air force after fatal crashes

The Russian air force has been grounded for a week in a move that marks the deepest humiliation yet to be inflicted on the remnants of the once mighty Soviet military machine.

News agency reports in Moscow said the flying ban was imposed by the head of the force, General Pyotr Deinekin, following two fatal crashes involving military aircraft within

five days. Together, these claimed at least 76 lives.

The decision is certain to be seen as a further measure of Russia's plight by the disgruntled military, and particularly by two former generals campaigning to oust Boris Yeltsin - Alexander Lebed and Lev Rokhlin.

According to Russia's Interfax news agency, the grounding does not apply to aircraft on

combat duty. On Thursday, eight people were killed when a military An-12 hit a helicopter while landing at Naryan-Mar in Russia's far north. Five days earlier, at least 68 people died when an An-124 cargo plane fell out of the sky. General Deinekin said the grounded aircraft would only be available for "military duties".

— Phil Reeves, Moscow

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Carlos the revolutionary scorns court's right to judge

Ilich Ramirez Sanchez, better known as Carlos the Jackal, dismissed his trial, which began in Paris yesterday, as 'illegal'. John Lichfield reports that in his urbane but pompous first public appearance the middle-aged Venezuelan declared himself a 'professional revolutionary in the old Leninist tradition'.

legitimate sadness of the families" of victims.

Carlos repeatedly described himself as a "professional revolutionary in the old Leninist tradition" and said he was fighting "for humanity, for the people of Palestine, for the people of France" and against what he called "American imperialism and the Zionist state".

Security for the trial, which is being held at the Palais de Justice, close to Notre Dame Cathedral in the centre of Paris, was unusually tight.

The terror network run by Carlos with the help of Soviet bloc governments collapsed long ago but the police were taking no chances.

Through his many lawyers, Ramirez Sanchez has threatened to use the trial to make embarrassing revelations about his trade-offs with Western governments and security services in the Eighties.

As a result, the French authorities say that they have not ruled out the possibility of an attempt on Carlos's own life.

The trial is expected to last a week. Ramirez Sanchez has already been convicted, in his absence, and sentenced to 30 years in prison, for the triple murder at a flat in the fifth arrondissement of Paris in June 1975.

In a lengthy interview in an Arab newspaper in the Eighties, Carlos admitted the killings but under French law he is entitled to another trial in person.

At the start of yesterday's hearing, Carlos took charge of the jury selection himself. He objected to one man and a woman with an Arab-sounding name. The second objection was puzzling, given the fact that Carlos undertook many of his most spectacular actions - including the kidnapping of Opec (Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries) oil ministers in December 1975 - in the name of the Palestinian cause.

Before the hearing, Carlos's leading lawyer, Isabelle Coutant-Peyre, repeated the threat that her client would make damaging revelations if the trial went ahead.

Asked what these would be, she said: "You'll see."



Paris alert: A police officer on duty yesterday in the court of justice district, where security is tight for the trial of Ramirez Sanchez, below, in a photograph taken in prison recently

Photograph: Michel Euler



The former Global Public Enemy Number One seemed to enjoy his first day in court after three years in French jails. He smiled so enthusiastically at the mostly female jury that he was told off by the presiding judge. He gave his profession as "professional revolutionary" and his address as "the world is my domain, last address, Khartoum."

As expected, Ramirez Sanchez, 48, the son of a lawyer, challenged the legality of the proceedings and partially conducted his own defence. "I cannot be judged because of the conditions of my arrest," he declared.

The man blamed for many of the most spectacular terrorist actions of the Seventies and Eighties, was seized by French agents in Sudan in 1994 with the connivance of the Sudanese authorities.

He is charged with the murder of two French secret service agents and a Lebanese informer in Paris in 1975 but other trials are expected to follow.

Looking relaxed in a beige jacket and multi-coloured cravat, Carlos spoke calmly, although he often lapsed into the dated revolutionary terminology of his era.

He objected to the presence of the lawyer representing families of his alleged victims, claiming that he was a "militant Zionist revisionist".

He also lambasted one of the civil parties in the case, SOS-Attentats, calling it "extremist, racist and revisionist." He said the group was "exploiting the

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Almost every year since the 1979 revolution, Iran's film directors have won an international prize – but no thanks to the government. When Abbas Kiaorstami wished to enter his *Taste of the Cherry* for the

Cannes festival this year, the Ministry of Islamic Guidance delayed the film's export licence for so long that the reels only arrived in France after the festival had begun.

Incredibly, the story of a potential suicide vainly seeking help from friends and strangers to kill himself won the *Palme d'Or*. It was a slap in the face for the Iranian ministry but earned a peck on the cheek for Kiarostami from Catherine Deneuve. When the director returned home in triumph to Tehran, he was forced to flee the airport to avoid outraged radicals who claimed he had breached Is-

lamic morals by accepting a "hiss" from Ms Deneuve.

Since President Mohamed Khatami's election last May, however, there are discreet signs that the lot of Iran's film-makers is improving. *The Snowman* was originally banned by the authorities but now it draws packed houses in Tehran, where its daring contents – the film includes pre-revolutionary songs – have prompted Iranians to ask whether new cultural freedoms may after all be on the way. Women are shown with little head-covering and the hero's cross-dressing in an attempt to find an American "husband" in Turkey astonished cinema-goers.

After four years of refusals from the Islamic Guidance ministry, known by the single word "ErsHAD" (Guidance), Tahmineh Milani has just been given permission to make her film *Two Women*, a story of two female students at Tehran university during the revolution. One of the women is rich but untalented, the other poor but very intelligent; the wealthy student is successful, the poor woman fails. Social injustice, the film will say, continued after the revolution.

Milani, a 37-year-old architect, is one of Iran's six female directors (there are about 200 male film-makers) but had received no authorisation to make a film since 1993. "There is a very good feeling in the industry that things are going to change," she says. "Of course, all of us voted for Mr Khatami because we didn't want Mr Nateq-Nouri [Khatami's conservative challenger] to get elected. I just thought he was the best among the candidates. It doesn't mean he's my ideal person and we cannot expect a miracle from him. But since he arrived, he's got rid of people in the Ershad who were very conservative and who were holding everyone back."

Cinema lovers should treasure the restrictions imposed on Iranian film directors last year by Ezzatollah Zarghami, a former army officer incoherently appointed deputy minister in charge of the cinema.

He decreed that in Iranian films there should be: no close-up shots of women; no foreign music; no clothes on women which showed the shape of their bodies; no ties or bow-ties, un-

less the wearers were depicted as being morally evil: oo badly-dressed policemen or soldiers and oo jokes about them: no physical contact between men and women; definitely oo kissing between meo and women. By way of greeting, men could kiss each other (platotically, of course); no Islamic holy oames could be given to bad characters; no film should be without a scene of men or womeo at prayer.

Zarghami was laughed out of office within months.

Milani has no time for those who look back with nostalgia on the pre-revolutionary Iranian cinema when, she says, sex, violence and cheap musical stories were pre-requisites for any successful movie. "After the revolution, for a period, things got better," Milani says. "Mr Khatami ran the Ershad at that time. Later, things changed and the restrictions forced people to look for different things. When you take sex and violence out of a movie, you have to replace it with something else; you have to find some new meaning to entertain the audience."

Amid the swamp of war movies on the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war, Milani wanted to make a picture which depicted "the power of war" and the way that it affected families. "When a man goes to war, it is his decision but when he gets killed, it affects all his family. They are paralysed when a person in the family dies," she says. Milani visited the old war front at Qasr Shirin. The Ershad was not interested in such films.

If things are improving – and they appear to be – this is good news in a country where the cinema has often been the template of political change. No one has forgotten that it was a cinema fire in Abadan, killing more than 400 people, which provoked many of the anti-Shah street demonstrations in 1979. Milani is designing a new cinema for Tehran, along with her architect husband. President Khatami has appointed a film director, Setofflah Dad, whose *Lone Survivor* was filmed in Lebanon and depicted Palestinian women without Islamic head covering, as the new deputy minister of cinema.

Iranian films have won 30 awards in the last decade and bring in more audiences than imported Western movies. But then what else would you expect when almost all scenes involving women were cut from *Dances with Wolves*, *Marathon Man* and *The Last Emperor*?

THE INDEPENDENT

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In the last ten years, in Africa especially, Oxfam has seen a big increase in the use

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In a world where 90 per cent of war casualties are caused by small arms, child soldiers are increasingly pulling the trigger. But something can be done, and you can help.

In two weeks the UK assumes the Presidency of the European Union. This is your chance – to join us in calling for a tough EU code of conduct on arms sales. One with teeth. One without

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14/TERRORISM

Britain accused of harbouring Egypt's 'evil mastermind'

After the slaughter at Luxor last month, the Egyptian President, Hosni Mubarak, lashed out at Britain for "harbouring terrorists under the slogan of human rights" and Egypt published a list on the Internet of "wanted masterminds of terrorism". Steve Crowshaw hears what a "terrorist mastermind" has to say, and finds some strange ambiguities.

High on the Egyptians' hate-list is Yasser el-Serri, whose application for asylum in the UK is now being considered. Mr el-Serri was convicted in his absence in Egypt in connection with the attempted assassination in 1993 of the prime minister, Atef Sedki, in which a young girl died. He is one of the main reasons why Egypt claims that Britain adopts a soft policy on terrorism.

Mr el-Serri was no longer in Egypt at the time of the assassination attempt. He insists, too, that he was not involved in the attack from afar. "Mubarak feels no shame to do whatever suits him. It's a fabricated propaganda, aimed at Great Britain. It's obvious that because Mubarak has failed in his internal policies, he wants to attract the attention of abroad."

He condemns the slaughter at Luxor, where 58 tourists died, while seeking to spread the blame. "I condemn the massacre in Egypt - and also the Egyptian regime which is responsible for terrorist activities." He is happy to describe himself as an Islamic fundamentalist - reason enough for him to be anathema to the Egyptian government. He insists on his belief in Islamic *sharia* law - and argues that this belief includes an abhorrence of violence. "As Muslims, we are not allowed to kill innocent people."

In Britain, Mr el-Serri occupies a political no-man's land. He is under constant surveillance by Special Branch and MI5 - as potential suspect, and as potential victim. His Special Branch minders advised him to change his address for his own safety (in Mr el-Serri's words: "not because we like you - but because we don't let these things happen here"). He insists that his Islamic Observatory Centre, which he runs from his flat, is only a "humanitarian and media platform", and does not raise funds for potential terrorist activities - which would become illegal under proposed new UK laws.



Yasser el-Serri denies he is a terrorist, saying that his Islamic beliefs are incompatible with such activities

Photograph: Tom Piltson

Egypt has repeatedly demanded that he be returned to Egypt in connection with his conviction *in absentia*. "Many times, the Egyptian government asked me to be transferred [back to Egypt]. And many times the British Government refused. They kept saying: 'Give us evidence.'" The Home Office refuses to comment on the details of Mr el-Serri's case, beyond confirming that an application for asylum has been received.

Mr el-Serri insists that he accepts the ambiguous terms of his stay in the UK. He says it is right that both sides can be punished for a violent foul. "The British Government is like the referee. They will give the red card to the Egyptian secret police - or to the fundamentalists. I respect that."

Certainly, the Egyptian security services are interested in gathering more informa-

tion. At a recent anti-government demonstration at its embassy in Mayfair, besetted men with video cameras peered from behind the curtains, filming the crowd.

None the less, Egyptian policy towards opponents of the regime remains mysterious. The Egyptian embassy in London has been in touch with Mr el-Serri about the possibility of "opening a dialogue". *The Independent* has spoken to a go-between involved in the tentative approaches, which apparently included representatives of the Egyptian security services. Mr el-Serri confirmed that the approaches had taken place, but claimed that Special Branch had told him to be wary. Egyptian officials deny that there have been any approaches. But it is clear that, when it comes to "terrorist masterminds", not all is as it seems.

A SAFE HAVEN SINCE CONRAD'S DAY

Britain's liberal treatment of asylum seekers caused frequent clashes with the rest of Europe in the nineteenth century: it was seen as a safe haven for terrorists and anarchists. Reactionary regimes in Vienna and Moscow, in particular, believed that Britain's openness to refugees was just the cover for hostile scheming against them.

This formed the background to Joseph Conrad's 1907 novel, *The Secret Agent*. Verloc, a double agent, is encouraged by Vladimir, an official at an unnamed European embassy (probably the Russians) to mount a terrorist outrage aimed at shocking the British

into a clampdown. Vladimir lectures Verloc: "England lags. This country is absurd with its sentimental regard for individual liberty. ... The imbecile bourgeoisie of this country make themselves the accomplices of the very people whose aim is to drive them out of their houses to starve in ditches. And they have the political power still, if they only had the sense to use it for their own preservation. ... What they want just now is a jolly good scare."

Verloc is told to mount a bomb attack on the Greenwich Observatory, on the basis that "The whole civilised world has heard of Greenwich."

Where freedom and law collide

For any democracy, dealing with alleged terrorists seeking asylum from abroad involves a difficult balancing act. The Government has to reconcile the likely impact on its bilateral relations with the other country involved - in this case Egypt - and its commitments to combat terrorism, against obligations under international treaties.

The result can often be to upset both human rights campaigners and the terrorists' home-government.

In the United Kingdom, all applications for asylum are individually considered, under the terms of the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, and a later 1967 Protocol. Even if someone is categorised as a terrorist applying for asylum, they cannot simply be shipped back to their home country. Under Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights, soon to be incorporated into British law, a terrorist cannot be returned to a country where he or she fears "cruel or degrading" treatment. People considered to be plotting in this country to cause terrorist acts elsewhere can be prosecuted, but such cases are rare.

A recent report into anti-terrorism laws by Lord Lloyd of Berwick described the lack of a general offence to conspire to commit such acts abroad as a "major gap" in British law.

It is an area which Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, is to consider in the review of anti-terrorism legislation. However, Mr Straw has himself raised the issue of the "Mandela" question. Would a democracy wish to treat those fighting against oppression, as the ANC were against the apartheid regime, in the same way as other supposed "terrorists"?

At the same time Mr Straw has made it clear he wants to toughen up on extremist groups using Britain as a fund-raising base. And as the focus on Irish terrorism fades, however temporarily, more attention is being given to the question of extreme Islamic groups using Britain as a centre for their operations.

— Michael Streeter
Legal Affairs Correspondent

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Accidents in hospital cost £150m a year

More than a million accidents a year could be happening in English hospitals, a Commons committee warned last night. Anthony Bevins, Political Editor, examines a scathing audit of safety on the wards.

"Hospitals are dangerous places," David Davis, Conservative chairman of the Commons Public Accounts Committee, said last night.

"There are dangers for staff, for patients and for visitors. The simple fact is that the levels of accidents are too high. Health and safety legislation is there to protect people, but it is being blatantly ignored."

Evidence given to the MPs showed that patients in the Royal Liverpool Hospital were nine times more likely to have an accident than patients in the South Manchester University Teaching Hospital.

When hospitals were asked to report on the action they had taken to cure the problem, the Carlisle Hospitals NHS Trust said, among other things, that it had "amended cleaning procedures to prevent high level of slips in corridors". Trafford Healthcare Trust said it was "pursuing access to advice on health and safety from a competent person".

The accident-prone Royal Liverpool University Hospitals said, among other action taken, that a "risk and claims management post [had been] established".

The MPs' report said: "We consider it essential that hospitals should be made safer

places to be treated in, to work in, and to visit."

But they warned: "On the basis of an accident recording exercise in 30 trusts, the National Audit Office estimated that there were likely to have been some 450,000 accidents during 1995 in NHS acute hospital trusts in England."

"Allowing for under-recording, there may have been in excess of one million accidents. The costs of accidents were likely to have been at least £154 million a year." That money would have been better spent on patient treatment, the MPs said.

But the criticism did not end there. "Although the NHS Executive issued guidance on incident recording systems in 1993," the report said, "17 of the 30 trusts visited by the National Audit Office did not have systems which met the requirements of a good system."

"The Health and Safety Executive estimated that the health sector reports, on average, only 37 per cent of the accidents they are legally required to report." That low level of reporting was condemned by the MPs as "highly unsatisfactory".

It was also reported by the MPs that 15 per cent of all staff accidents recorded in surveyed hospitals involved lifting patients and equipment.

Perhaps in response to that, the West Lancashire Healthcare Trust told the MPs: "Training in manual handling has now been incorporated into the induction course."

• *Health and Safety in NHS Acute Hospital Trusts in England*. Public Accounts Committee, second report. Commons paper 350, session 1997-98. Stationery Office; £8.60.



Bond with me, baby: Scientific interest has focused on chemical triggers that cement human relationships

Photograph: Michael Goldman

Love is ... a sniff of the right type of body odour

A biochemist believes he has cracked the chemistry of love. Jeremy Laurance, Health Editor, asks if smell can trigger human longing.

United States scientists believe they have uncovered a key mechanism in the attachment that mothers feel for their babies. Research on rats and mice shows that the act of giving birth releases chemicals in

the brain that lay down a neural pathway - an electrical circuit in the brain - which establishes the loving bond.

The research, reported in *New Scientist*, suggests that for those mothers who reject their babies at birth, the absence of the loving bond could be remedied with a carefully timed dose of drugs. But the finding has also reawakened interest in the chemical triggers that draw males and females together.

Dr George Dodd, a bio-

chemist and perfumer and former director of the Institute of Olfactory Research at the University of Warwick, says that pheromones - odiferous chemicals that represent a person's unique sexual signature - can be used to select compatible partners.

Dr Dodd, who runs a healing centre in the west of Scotland, claims to have bottles of human pheromones which he describes as the world's first scientifically tested love potion. "We judge people through the

nose. If you want to appear as one of the warmer people at a party you can use these pheromones. It will enhance your chances," he told the *Today* programme on BBC Radio 4.

It is through the baby's bond with its mother that the power of pheromones is established, according to Dr Dodd. "When we are attracted to someone we unconsciously register their pheromones. They trigger ancient memories of being cuddled in the first few minutes of

life." Dr Dodd believes that dating agencies would score higher success rates if they made use of pheromones. By asking applicants to rank their preferences for 12 different families of synthetic human pheromones, which can be sent by post on tear off strips, it would be possible to match compatible dates.

"The sexually compatible enjoy each other's body odour. There's an odour conversation between them. That is what is meant by sexual chemistry."

Doctors' run on GP funds feared

National Health Service managers warned yesterday that there could be a run on health authority funds, damaging patient care, following the Government's announcement this week of an end to GP fund-holding.

Health authorities hold an estimated £200m of accrued savings on behalf of GP fund-holders, and fear that family doctors may seek to withdraw it suddenly now they know that fundholding is to end by April 1999.

Jaki Meekings, chairman of the Healthcare Financial Management Association, said: "This money belongs to the GPs and is held by health authorities who have used it for their own purposes but who are acting effectively as a savings bank. They have planned to pay it back but our worry is the doctors may all want it at once. It is like all the members of a building society going in and withdrawing their savings on the same day."

There are 3,500 GP fund-holders, covering more than half the population, who are allocated budgets for drugs, nursing staff and routine hospital care for their patients. They are allowed to keep any savings they make to invest in extending their surgeries or improving patient care in other ways. Up to four years' savings can be accrued before they must be spent.

Under the Government's plans for the NHS, set out in a White Paper published last Tuesday, GP fundholding is to be replaced from April 1999 by Primary Care Groups, local collectives of about 50 GPs who will have control of almost the entire NHS budget for their areas.

Ms Meekings said it was the association's job to warn of any move which could financially destabilise the NHS.

— Jeremy Laurance

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Rebels fail to blunt Blair's resolve

Undaunted and undeterred by this week's Commons revolt on lone parents' benefit, Tony Blair is determined to press on with welfare reform. Anthony Bevis, Political Editor, finds some of his ministerial colleagues shaken by the prospect.

The hard edge of Labour's welfare reforms is to continue with a cutback in industrial injuries benefit, according to ministerial sources yesterday.

The Prime Minister is as gung-ho for change as he appeared yesterday when he told Sun readers: "The easy way out on welfare is to keep the status quo. To keep the cycle of dependency which traps so many, I will not do that. I want to build a modern Britain and a decent society. To do that, we need compassion, with a hard edge."

The hard edge means demanding responsibility, knowing when to say no to demands for more money, and knowing that without a stable economy with debt in control, compassion on its own will be useless.

Many of Mr Blair's Labour colleagues are behind him in seeking ways of breaking benefits dependency, and they are prepared to make the "hard choices" to back that up.

But ministers and loyalist MPs alike have this week started to doubt the Prime Minister's judgement - because the decision on lone parents benefit, if anything, could make the target group even more dependent on their benefit. Those who find work would go back to the new, lower benefit rate if they lost that job.

They also strongly doubt the

wisdom of punishing single parents with children under school age.

But *The Independent* has been told that in spite of the trauma of Wednesday's Commons vote - when the anguish, grief and rage was palpable as MPs went loyally into the division lobby - Mr Blair remains unshaken.

There is real concern that if the Prime Minister is relying on the advice and wisdom of Peter Mandelson, jokingly referred to as the Minister with all Portfolios, and some other members of his inner circle, he is getting out of touch. One minister said that if reform was blindly pursued, there was a danger that the revolt would become incremental, with more and more MPs defying the leadership. The risk, then, would be of Mr Blair going deeper and deeper into his Number 10 bunker, and becoming even more reliant on unsound advice.

As for the threat of party discipline, it was a commonplace at Westminster on Thursday that Nick Brown, the Government Chief Whip, had no intention of cracking down on Wednesday night's rebels - simply because, having been brought up by a lone mother, his heart was not in it.

The Independent understands that the most likely target for the next cut is industrial injuries disablement benefit, for which 265,000 claimants currently get £718m a year.

Some ministers believe that they could "sell" that cut on the grounds that people injured and disabled at work get much more, at a maximum of around £101.10 per week, according to the Social Security Department yesterday, than people identically injured and disabled in accidents at home, who receive £84.10 a week, at most.



Full plate: Tony Blair taking notes at the two-day European Union summit in Luxembourg yesterday as, at home, the dissension within his party's ranks over benefit cuts shows no sign of abating. Photograph: Jerry Lampen/Reuters

Oxfam condemns arms sales breach

Oxfam yesterday accused the Government of being in breach of its own guidelines on arms sales. Eleven arms export licences have been granted to Indonesia since 28 July, when Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, announced new regulations for arms sales overseas.

"This flies in the face of the criteria," an Oxfam spokesman said yesterday. "In practice, what is happening is not the same as Mr Cook is saying."

Oxfam's analysis suggested that since Labour took office in May, there have been 22 arms export licences issued for Indonesia - half of them since Mr Cook issued his new regulations.

According to Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, just four applications have been rejected since the new regulations were introduced. But the Oxfam spokesman said that government figures presented only half the picture, because they related to military equipment. Police equipment, which could also be used for repression, was not included.

Opening a campaign with advertisements in some newspapers today - showing a child with a gun, and the message "Dear Santa, please don't send me a gun this Christmas" - Oxfam said that current regulations were still too weak.

It urged the Government during its six-month presidency of the European Union, from January, "to agree a genuinely tough EU-wide code of conduct on arms exports to prevent arms going to repressive regimes".

The spokesman said the Charity Commission had ruled that charities were allowed to become involved in political campaigning, such as the landmines campaign, where the issues involved were "pertinent" to their work.

"If we are to stop small arms falling into small hands, then a vital part of the solution is for both British and EU arms sales to be regulated by a far tougher code of conduct than the Government appears committed to," Diana Molise, head of policy at Oxfam, said.

Oxfam has discovered, according to the latest analysis of export licences, that a "worrying" number have been agreed for countries where there is a strong risk of weapons being used against civilians - including Turkey, Indonesia, Algeria, Colombia and Nigeria.

— Anthony Bevis

Commons souvenir that comes with a government health warning

The Government has faced heavy flak for seeming to have softened its stance on the issue of tobacco sponsorship. But it should be grateful that critics failed to notice the smoke signals closer to home.

For as ministers thrash out whether tobacco sponsorship encourages people to smoke, the Government has come under fire for failing to ban sales of its own House of Commons branded cigarettes. The offending items came to light when Bob Russell, Liberal Democrat MP for Colchester, asked the chairman of the catering

committee in a written question whether he would "take steps to discourage sales" of the cigarettes.

Dennis Turner, Labour MP for Wolverhampton SE, replied: "It would be very unusual if a chairman of the Catering Committee sought to discourage the sale and consumption of items sold as gifts and souvenirs from the Refreshment Department outlets... The view of the Committee was that for as long as the smoking of tobacco products was legal, then it was acceptable for the Department's outlets to sell cigarettes." — Jojo Moyes

Treasury mandarin backs Robinson as Lilley steps up financial attack

The Treasury's top civil servant has insisted that the Paymaster General, Geoffrey Robinson, acted correctly in the handling of his financial affairs.

The comments by Sir Terry Burns, Permanent Secretary, come in a letter to the shadow Chancellor, Peter Lilley, in a response to queries about Mr Robinson's position.

Controversy flared when it emerged that Mr Robinson was the discretionary beneficiary of an offshore trust established by a Belgian friend who has since died.

Sir Terry's letter refers first to Mr Robinson's personal

holdings - worth at least £18m. It says: "My discussions with the Paymaster General about his financial interests focused on his beneficial holdings and my advice to him was that it would be appropriate to transfer them to a blind trust, which is what happened. During the course of the discussion the Paymaster General told me of the existence of a family trust. Since this vehicle already existed, and offered similar protection to that provided by a blind trust, there was no reason to consider it further."

Sir Terry's reference to "protection" is an allusion to Mr Robinson's relationship to the



Sir Terry Burns: Discussions with Paymaster General

Orion Trust set up by his Belgian friend. He insists that he has no say over the handling of the trust - as is the case now with the blind trust containing his personal holdings.

Mr Robinson commented later: "Sir Terry Burns completely vindicated me. I acted in accordance with the ministerial code and on the advice of the Treasury Permanent Secretary."

Mr Lilley has written again to Sir Terry, asking if he would now revise his advice to the minister "in the light of the facts that have now come to light".

days, it has become clear that the Paymaster General has been economical with the truth in public statements about his personal financial arrangements," he said. "It has now emerged that he even kept the Permanent Secretary to the Treasury in the dark about the nature of his offshore family trust in Guernsey."

The shadow Chancellor said he had asked Sir Terry in a letter last week how much Mr Robinson had told him.

"Did Sir Terry know that the Orion Trust had been involved in complicated share transactions with Mr Robinson's company, Stenbell Limited?"

"Did Sir Terry know that the Orion Trust now owns a significant stake in Mr Robinson's former company, TransTec?"

"Sir Terry's reply confirms that he was not made aware of these important - and highly relevant - matters."

— Jojo Moyes

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اصحاب الاموال



It's a mad, mad world, my masters: John Quayle as Adam Overdo, a censorious JP on the prowl for iniquity in the guise of a lunatic

Photograph: Bill Cooper/EPO

Welcome, people, one and all, to Bartholomew Fair

The RSC's new, carnival-style staging of Ben Jonson's rarely seen comedy finally frees the text from the fettering footnotes of its classic status. Even Puritans, says Paul Taylor, will enjoy the fun of this 'Fair'.

Laurence Boswell's production of *Bartholomew Fair* is the most brilliantly co-terminating breach of the peace the RSC has served up in a long time. Ben Jonson's mighty Jacobean comedy – in which self-deceived, two-faced Puritans go on a research trip into the great, avid, rocking maw of the Fair and get badly mangled – has a reputation for being the kind of show that, pullulantly popular and full of specificities and argot now

past their sell-by date, triggers winnies of learned laughter in the senior common room but leaves the general theatre-going public unable to find their feet amidst the footnotes.

Productions, few on the ground, tend to disappoint. Richard Eyre's Victorian vision of the piece at the National in the late 1980s painstakingly and intelligently fingered Jonson as the pungent precursor of Dickens. But, perhaps because of its tripling of historical perspectives, that staging had too tethered a feel. Boswell's, set in a Notting Hill Carnival-like atmosphere, goes into orbit. Move over Martin Amis, it's Jonson who is our contemporary.

The admirable rule (pioneered at the Royal Court) that you should do modern plays as if they were classics, and classic plays as if they were bot off the press, is put into practice here with elating chutzpah, malign

energy and (by and large) inspired loyalty to the original. Boswell's *Bartholomew Fair* would give a buzz and many a thought-provoking belly-laugh to the young audiences now packing out the same director's production of Ben Elton's *Popcorn*: it is, therefore, in sharp contrast to this week's other Stratford opening of a classic.

Gregory Doran's *Merchant of Venice*, starring Philip Voss as Shylock, is for the middle-aged at heart. There are some nice touches: an Antonio so ascetically thin that Voss's hammy tragic, knife-wielding Shylock is hard put to scrunch up enough withered flesh to cut; Shylock's humiliation signalled by the fact that, attempting to rise to his feet to leave the court, he keeps falling back to his knees on the slippery carpet of gold coins contemptuously flung down for him earlier. But, set in a Venice of deter-

minedly brooding mists, oppressive black walls and spitting Christian raelists – and with a Portia (from Helen Schlesinger) who doesn't convince you that Belmont would be much of a picnic either – this is a staging that, for long stretches, comes across as just the latest thing to fall off the RSC's main-stage Shakespeare machine.

Bartholomew Fair is in a different league altogether. Louche, sleazy, at once arousing and intimidating, this kind of fair appeals to that part in everyone that would like to be defiled. Boswell evokes this setting, a kind of red-light district of the soul, with great wit and economy. For example, a curtain made up of long strings of light bulbs that sashays back and forth over the stage can also swing on its axis – a knack that comes in handy when the production wants to show us, filically, the dizzy, strobing way the

world looks from inside the skull of an innocent who is going out of his skull on the party atmosphere created, as a diversion, by pickpockets. Hilarity shades into the sinister and back into hilarity. Imagine the young Alec Guinness trying to do a funky Marvin Gaye impression and you'll get some idea of the blissfully funny incongruity of the sequence where, to a live reggae number, Tom Goodman-Hill's terminally guileless young heir (literature's first recorded shopaholic) tries to dance up a storm like the cool Jamaican dude he so egregiously isn't.

Dream casting brings Jonson's vast canvas of eccentrics and hypocrites to life with rollicking recognisability, from Rob Edwards' splendid Quarious, a superior-acting dropout on the make who is like a frowstily bung-over refugee from *Widnail and I*, to David Henry's spherically well-fed Zeal-of-the-land

Busy, the kind of born-again "visionary" who these days would be raking it in on a Christian cable channel. This charlatan decides it is quite all right for a Puritan to eat Bartholomew-pig provided one consumes it with a "reformed mouth", a sophistry tantamount to saying that sodomy is fine for Christian fundamentalists provided it is engaged in with a "reformed anus". John Quayle's Adam Overdo, the censorious Justice of the Peace who monitors the iniquities in the guise of a madman, is first seen emerging from hiding in a skip. Best place for this idiot in a play full of potential but disqualified moral arbiters. Roll up, roll up, for the delectably dubious fun of this Fair.

'Bartholomew Fair' at the Swan, 'Merchant of Venice' at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon (booking: 01789 295623)

Hark at Lady Muck – giving Cleopatra the northern touch

THE WEEK ON RADIO
ROBERT HANKS

Northernness is a many-splendoured thing, and exactly what it means depends on how far south you're starting. The composer Piers Hellawell, who is presenting a new World Service series on northern music called *Northern Lights*, starts reckoning from the Outer Hebrides, where

he lives and works (though, judging by his accent, he's a pony southerner). So, for him, the chief feature of the northern condition is a purer relationship with nature: solitude, stark skies, unbounded elements, silence – these strip away the barriers we place between ourselves and the encircling world.

The tone for the first programme, broadcast on Saturday, was set by the framing music: the Finnish composer Einojuhani

Rautavaara's *Canas Arcticus*, a piece which, for once, deserves the epithet "haunting". The most striking feature of the work is the way it uses taped birdsong in place of a choir – mournful whoops, like a curlew, provided the foundation for hicak, open chords on strings. Rautavaara confirmed the notion, implicit in the music, that northernness is a philosophical condition: listening to the music of his Finnish colleagues, he imagines a Finnish

farmer sitting outside his sauna by a lake, thinking deep thoughts, and saying two or three words he would never normally utter.

This was touching. But it was hard not to feel that other, less poetically attractive aspects of northernness were being glossed over. (For instance, I couldn't help noticing that Rautavaara's first name, pronounced something like "I know you honey", sounds just like a line from an Abba record.)

And the issue was confused when Peter Maxwell Davies, speaking from his Orcadian fastness, started to talk about the qualities of northern England – "In the North they'll tell you if they think you're a fool." There are qualities which the north of England and the Nordic world would both lay claim to (including hardihood, bluntness of speech and the ability to hold large quantities of liquor); but they are very different things.

The difference was illustrated by Northern Broadside's production of *Antony and Cleopatra* (Radio 3, Sunday). This was performed in what Barrie Rutter terms "the Northern voice". For a while, I toyed with the idea that the Romans were stiff-necked Yorkshiremen, the Egyptians wily Lancastrians, but in fact both sides were a mixed bunch. In a northern voice, the exotic intimacy of Cleopatra's court became a bit of a matter at the

hairdresser's, while dialogue between rulers and servants seemed to acquire a bizarrely aggressive edge. Cleopatra's handmaiden Charmian, as played by Julie Livesey, had echoes of Caroline Aherne's cheek-out girl in *The Fast Show* ("Ooh, ribbed condoms – very considerate"); "Give me to drink mandragora," Cleopatra tells Charmian. "Why, madam?" she demands, with obvious disapproval ("Hark at Lady Muck").

Bear in mind I write as a genetically pure Yorkshireman. The intonations of the urban north of England are adapted to convey deflation, irony, challenge. And this northernness didn't diminish the production. It wasn't the most moving *Antony and Cleopatra*, but it constantly opened new ways of reading relationships, fresh ways of hearing lines. How many productions of Shakespeare do that?

"BRILLIANT... DEFINITELY NOT TO BE MISSED"

"A DOWNRIGHT MASTERPIECE" "QUIETLY EXPLOSIVE... WELL WORTH SEEING"

"BRILLIANT... STUNNING... SEE IT" "SHARPLY FUNNY"

LAWN DOGS

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The modern Huckleberry Finns: young runaways are fleeing school, parents and boredom. Not all come back

We should not be too surprised when kids do a bunk, and head for the bright lights. After all, children's literature is full of such adventure, tales of those setting off heroically with their spotted handkerchiefs on the cod of a stick. Think of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn hiding out on Jackson's Island to escape Injun Joe and the oagging of Aunt Polly. Oliver Twist ran away to escape life as an undertaker's apprentice and nights spent sleeping in a coffin.

More recently, Terence Blacker's Nineties novel, *Homebird*, tells the tale of a 13-year-old who, underachieving at boarding school, escapes only to find his parents' marriage in trouble. So he runs and runs. Tony Blair himself has revealed that he ran away from boarding school at 13, ending up at Newcastle airport, where only the lack of international flights dashed his hopes of stowing away to Bermuda.

BY JACK
O'SULLIVAN

So teenagers are not short of adventurous example. Yet even these stories offer cautionary hints of the potential horrors facing runaways. Huck Finn and Tom return home to find their funeral in progress. Oliver ends up friends with the Artful Dodger and in the clutches of Fagin.

The teenagers in Melvin Burgess's controversial, award-winning novel, *Junk*, exist in a dark world of heroin addiction. Terence Blacker's runaway finds bleak refuge in a squat. He says that he made his main character middle class precisely to show that even better off children can wash up on the street.

If anybody doubted him, Blacker's proposition got plenty of high-profile support from reality this week. The papers were thick with stories of middle-class children disappearing.

In retrospect, the most high-profile of these oow looks almost banal as the 12-year-old in question was found the next day, unharmed. But in another case, a 17-year-old boy slept rough for weeks on the streets of London.

Consider the case of Anne Atkins, the *Daily Telegraph's* very Christian agony aunt, who discovered on Sunday morning that her 12-year-old daughter, Bink (Adelaide), had gone missing in London, having left a note on the kitchen table: "I'll be back soon, so don't worry about me."

Nearly 36 hours later, following a huge police search using helicopters, Bink was found. She had spent a rainy night in the local cemetery and eaten nothing more than a McDonald's large number-three meal and a cake, bought with a fiver given by a concerned passer by. Upon her return, Bink explained: "I didn't not want to be at home - I just wanted to go away for a few days. I had an overwhelming feeling of sadness, not about anything in particular, just general. It made me feel that I wanted to hide from people so they wouldn't find me."

The story of 17-year-old Alex Davies is more taxing. Last week, his face stared out of the missing person's column of the *Big Issue*, the magazine sold by homeless people. Alex had not been seen for nearly a month and his parents, Gordon Davies, a management consultant, and his wife Catherine, an insurance manager, were desperate.

They had travelled from their Somerset home several times to scour the streets of London unsuccessfully. Last Sunday they were searching again, in Leices-



Reunions: Above, Alex Davies, 17, was found by his parents, Catherine and Gordon; below, Bink, 12, returned to Shaun and Anne Photographs: SWNS/Tim Anderson



ter Square. "I saw someone in front of us," recalled Mrs Davies. "He did not look like Alex but he was wearing a Tottenham scarf and I decided to run after him just in case."

"He was walking very quickly and it became like one of those dreams where I was running and running and did not seem to

be getting anywhere. When I eventually caught up with him, I looked into this bearded face that was not Alex's, but then I recognised his eyes, he just said 'Mum' and we collapsed into each other's arms in tears."

Each of the stories reveals a truth about runaways - that they are usually fleeing

from something rather seeking some splendid dream.

Latterday Huckleberry Finns are exceptional. "The majority of younger people who run away are girls," said Sophie Woodford of the National Missing Person's Helpline. "They want to be with some older bloke, whom their parents want them

to stop seeing. We get a lot of people like Alex Davies running away because they

are worried about school. This is a particular problem with GCSEs because of the constant pressure of course work being assessed whereas with O-levels the pressure came at the end of the year with the exam. "A lot of youngsters are trying

to find their identity, trying to feel independent but have parents who are still treating them as a child. Bullying at school is another reason. Young people may leave because of stress at home, the break-up of a marriage or abuse. The trouble is that a lot of adolescents are not very good at airing their concerns so they take off rather than talking about their problems."

That said, Ms Woodford acknowledges that there are a few adventures left in the children's adventure story sense. "A few children still run away with the circus," she said, recalling one case where the only photograph they had of one teenager was of him dressed up as a clown.

Some stories retain, even in their unfolding, the promised romance of running away.

Thus, this weekend, the 17-year-old lovers, Olga Cardew and Alistair Tanner, from Bryanston School in Dorset, are being brought back home after escaping to Paris for a teenage tryst. They are more in the style of Peter Kerry, the schoolboy who ran away to Malaysia using his father's passport and credit card after a row with his family.

That is one kind of runaway story. Robert Swindells wrote a very different one in *Stone Cold*, his 1993 novel for teenagers. It describes a group of runaways to London, who are preyed on by an former sergeant major nicknamed Shelter. His mission is to clean up the streets and he dresses himself up as a do-gooder in corduroys and sandals. Offering a bed for the night, he brings his victims back to his flat, kills them, cuts their hair, dresses them in polished shoes and buries them in a line under the floorboards, tallest to the right, shortest to the left. He calls them his Camden horizontals.

Melvin Burgess, who did considerable research on the streets before publishing *Junk*, says that the image of the bogeyman waiting to entice a runaway into drugs and prostitution is exaggerated. "It is," he says, "the really vulnerable kids from shit backgrounds who already have loads of problems who get picked up."

Sophie Woodford agrees. "There are real dangers but there is a community on the streets which is also on the lookout for young runaways, to protect them and make sure they are not preyed upon," she said.

The official figures reveal that the vast majority of the 100,000 people under 18 reported missing every year return home within days. Nevertheless, in London alone, more than 100 teenage runaways go untraced each year.

Their families must cling on to the straws offered by another edition of the *Big Issue*, when the missing person's column showed a 15-year-old girl, her face still childish, with shiny blonde hair, trusting eyes and a smile for the camera. Yet the accompanying article described her as 32 years of age and 5ft 7in tall. She had been missing since 1978, when she ran away from her home in Deptford, south London. The published picture was the last one taken before she left.

At that point most people must have given her up for dead. Yet soon after that article, she was found. It emerged that today she is married with children and living in another part of the country.

She had run away after her sister had died in an accident for which she blamed herself. Seventeen years later she came back and made peace with her family and herself.

● The National Missing Persons Helpline is funded solely by charitable donation. Its freephone number is 0500 700 700. Message Home is a confidential freephone number for anyone missing who wishes to say they are alive and safe: 0500 700 740.



Are these the eyes of happy mavericks or hard-nosed businessmen?



It sounded like the ultimate Chris Evans jape when he announced it on his breakfast show on Virgin Radio: he wanted to buy the station to make sure he kept his job.

It was typically Chris to ask listeners to each send in some cash to help him buy it. "We have to buy the radio station by 19 November, otherwise we're out on our car," he said. "We need to get this sorted out - this is not a joke. If you can lend us £50m quid between you, we need it."

Everyone had a good laugh about it and spokesmen dismissed it as a stunt. Less than a month later, Evans (above, left) announced that he had snaffled the station from under Capital Radio's nose, taking a majority share worth £83m. He had got backing from Apex Partners and has just

signed a deal worth £25m for three years with Channel Four which means the new Ginger Media Group could become a reality. Quite a few people stopped laughing. Richard Branson (above right), who retained 45 per cent of Virgin Radio, said he had accepted Evans's bid because it appealed to the "maverick" in him.

The men have a lot in common: both cultivated that image, the outsider who hasn't lost touch with ordinary people, lives life to the full and make their own lives their unique selling point.

Every time a straw poll is taken for a putative president of a British republic, Lord Mayor of London or whatever, Branson is always up there. People like his beard, his jumpers, his attempts to sail a balloo around the world including this

week's debacle when the balloon sailed off without him (Branson and the Virgin logo were once again emblazoned all over the front pages). We like Branson because he says he wants to run the National Lottery on a not-for-profit basis or that he'll help come up with a solution for sport and tobacco sponsorship.

Without Branson, Virgin could not exist as it does: Branson is a walking, talking billboard - for himself. Yet at the same time the friendly exterior conceals an astute business man who is said to be "demanding" to work for.

Ordinary people like to think less

about the consumer's champion receiving bad marks from his passengers on Virgin trains where lateness and cramped conditions are all too frequent. The fact that he's the last man in the world you'd ask to get your balloon off the ground has so far done him no permanent damage.

Evans, for his part, has the image of radical funster and lager lad. But nobody could doubt that he is exceptionally driven and ambitious. Always an alert and

bright child, he speaks of his father's death when he was just 13 as "the shotgun which started the race".

His obsessive nature started to drive him towards one particular ambition - to be a Radio 1 DJ. He planned things carefully from the time he haunted Timmy Mallett who gave him his first job in Piccadilly Radio. His first job in London was for Radio Radio also then owned by Richard Branson back in 1988. He was poached by GLR but his big break came on the Big Breakfast earlier in the decade. The success of his show Don't Forget Your Toothbrush and then TFI Friday meant he was continually called the broadcasting talent of the decade.

If Capital Radio lost out on Virgin because they didn't take Evans seriously, they

have only themselves to blame. His company Ginger Productions is valued at £30m. He sells his own and other people's programmes to Channel 4 and Talk Radio.

Now the newly formed Ginger Media Group is planning a programme on supermodels on Channel 4, a series on golf as well as various quiz show ideas. Media insiders say that Ginger's ability to manage talented creative people mean that more are likely to flock to them.

He may have spent most of his time with showbizzy blondes in the past but at this week's No 10 bash he was seen talking to a woman of a rather different type - Elisabeth Murdoch, daughter of the ultimate media mogul. At the moment, for Evans the sky's the limit.

Professor Eric Laithwaite

the words of Gutiérrez: "The Land," he said, "is not simply country; it is also the gift of different situation."

From a butterfly's wing to Burger King: it really is chaos out there



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There were no butterflies in Burger King in Heathrow's Terminal One in the early hours of yesterday morning, as far as we know. The famous illustration of chaos theory imagines how the fluttering of a butterfly's wings could cause a hurricane a thousand miles away. It is a mathematical speculation intended to help understand the unpredictability of natural systems – how a tiny perturbation could make a difference between one climate pattern or another.

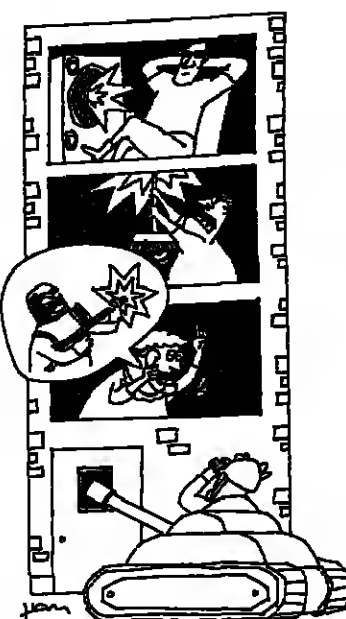
Now we have to invent a new chaos theory to help understand the unpredictability of human systems. Yesterday, a small fire in a burger bar stranded people in Aberdeen, grounded planes in South Africa and snarled up the motorways around west London. Anyone with the time and inclination to listen to or watch global, 24-hour news services could follow the ripples from a relatively trivial event as they spread out in distance and scale. There is a childish pleasure in watching a chain reaction develop in a series of events, some predictable, some unexpected. Of course, the disruption was serious, and inconvenient, and will cost businesses and individuals millions of pounds. Shares in BAA fell 13p before bouncing back as investors realised the losses were covered by insurance. But it

was fun to watch the ripples. It was fun in the way that Heath Robinson's unlikely contraptions are fun, or the children's game in which a marble rolls down a slide, tips a see-saw which swings a boot which kicks a cage which wobbles down a pole to catch a mouse.

Because Heathrow is the busiest hub of world air travel, and even though Terminal One mostly handles domestic and European flights, a fire in a burger bar air duct caused global gridlock. Well, if not gridlock, then a premonition of what might happen when the world becomes even more interdependent, more criss-crossed by webs of communication and transport.

With 180,000 people flying in and out of Heathrow every day, the greasy glitch touched all sorts of lives at random. John and Gillian Kernon did not manage to get from Somerset to Nuremberg for the Christmas fair. Our own political editor found himself in the House of Commons when he should have been in Luxembourg annoying the Prime Minister.

And, because there is only one road in and out of Heathrow through the tunnel under the runways, traffic tailed back all round the M25 and along the M4. As a result, there was an eerie calm in the streets of central London, because morning commuter traffic could not get through. Who



knows how many people were late for work, how many delivery deadlines were missed, how many millions were lost?

The growing complexity of human systems is understood by terrorists, which was why the IRA, in the days when it knocked on the door of Downing Street with mortar bombs, also launched a mor-

lar attack on Heathrow airport. Between the time when it was fighting a war against the "occupying" British army, and the time it demanded photocopying facilities in the House of Commons, the IRA went through a phase of targeting the nodal points of British social and economic organisation in order to cause maximum disruption. The attempt to blow up six electricity substations around London would have been a hit more than the flap of a butterfly's wing, but it was intended to cause dislocation out of all proportion to the trigger event.

It is salutary to be reminded of the frailty of complex systems. It was a tiny flicker of static electricity which destroyed the TWA jumbo jet over Long Island, according to the latest theory. A newspaper like this one relies on hundreds of computers linked by wires and switches. If one "computer server" crashes, the whole system stops. So the people who know what a server is have devised back-up systems and contingency plans, and another layer of unpredictable complexity is added. There is nothing new in this: in the old days of hot metal and typewriters the print unions understood too well how vulnerable the whole process was at certain links in the Heath Robinsonian chain.

And the butterfly's wing principle of momentous consequences flowing from trivial events has always given Fate the appearance of inevitable and logical unfolding. A few years further back in history, the Romans understood how the genes which shaped Cleopatra's nose started a war and destroyed an empire. Even the First World War seemed something of an overreaction, to say the least, to the anarchist's assassination of Archduke Ferdinand.

What has changed, though, is the speed with which a whole city, or worldwide Internet communications, can be brought to a halt by an escalating series of coincidences. Humanity is engaged in a constant battle to stop the complex systems it creates from seizing up. Traffic lights are computerised and linked to road sensors to keep the jams crawling. New bits are being plugged into the Internet to keep it growing faster than junk e-mail slows it down. New computer programs are being written to override the mistakes made by the old ones.

So the next time someone complains about the traffic and says, "It's chaos out there," point out how the non-linear dynamics of road transport are helping us understand the fuzzy logic of human systems. They will thank you for it.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Labour's benefit cut

Sir: Plans to restrict welfare benefits to lone parents need to be considered in the context of the government strategy to bring back the excluded sections of our society into the included fold.

Recognition of the dominance of the market economy and the necessity of being a productive part of it has had implications for all of us. The modernising element of the New Labour Party appears to now accept that the vast majority of us have to work. It recognises the wastefulness of large sections of the population living long-term on welfare benefits. At the height of North Sea Oil exploitation the annual total tax revenues were roughly equal to total spending on welfare benefits.

New Labour appears to be striving to be the New Workers Party. It seeks to represent all of us who work for a living while at the same time bringing the economically excluded back into the included fold. This is the central strategy of the "new thinking" or the "big idea".

Reducing benefits to lone parents is partly about restoring financial equity with those claimants who are required to register as unemployed. It will remove the current anomalous situation where an unemployed two-parent family receives a lower pro rata rate of benefit than a one-parent family. In the long term, both groups will be the target of further strategies to help bring them back into the inclusive world of opportunities and responsibilities.

ROGER HOPKINS BURKE
Lecturer in Criminal Justice Studies
Scarman Centre for the Study of Public Order
The University of Leicester

Sir: The events of Wednesday evening in Parliament represent once again the imposition by the Treasury of dominance over Parliamentary government. From within Whitehall I watched this happen to the Wilson and Heah governments.

The philosophy of the British Treasury, founded on the accounting principles of a Victorian parish council, has remained unchanged for over a century. They seek to control all public finance and dominate the political agenda. They hate all public expenditure, but particularly transfer payments – persons, social security and welfare.

They persuade each succeeding government that sound public finance consists in restricting public expenditure. They insist on exerting control throughout Whitehall and local government. They will not permit any hypothecation, they hate giving up any tax. They insist on controlling all borrowing.

And the irony is that the Treasury has been consistently unsuccessful in its economic policy. We have prospered in spite of them. No other advanced country gives such powers to the national book-keepers.

I like many, thought that this government would be strong enough to send the Treasury mandarins packing and create a sensible Ministry of Finance. The



Sunset ship: 'Britannia' could be a unique heritage asset if she belonged to Glasgow

Photograph: PA

Pride of the Clyde

Sir: The decision by the Ministry of Defence to shortlist either Manchester or Leith as the final resting place for the Royal Yacht *Britannia* (report, 11 December) appears to be based solely on the ability of a wealthy company in each of these places to advance money for preservation. Scant attention seems to have been paid

to British maritime heritage issues and more particularly to that of the river Clyde.

Britannia's importance, to any other place, is only as a very distinguished royal yacht. To Clydeside she is of great significance as a fine turbine-powered steamship created on this renowned shipbuilding river.

It was the development of steam power on the Clyde that,

from 1812 onwards, led to the Clyde becoming the most famous shipbuilding river in the world. By around 1900 half of all steamships in the world were Clyde-built. There is not at present any adequate material tribute. The Clyde Heritage Trust has proposed the creation of the Clyde Maritime Heritage Park at the Govan dry docks complex in Glasgow. This

development would be an international-class attraction, drawing some 350,000 visitors annually, and creating 600 jobs.

In this exciting development the ship taking pride of place would require at least some of these qualities: she must be Clyde-built; of reasonable proportions; a good example of a particular power era; preferably having been well maintained

during her life; with historic associations and a unique ability to attract visitors.

Britannia is the only existing Clyde-built ship possessing all of these qualities. She represents the last chance for Clyde-side to acquire a suitable example of over thirty thousand ships it has built.

DAVID B. PRICE
Cardross, Dunbartonshire

first signs were encouraging, with the Bank of England given responsibility for monetary policy. But could not last. Wednesday evening was their reply.

RICHARD GRAHAM
London SE26

Sir: As a working single parent I, personally, believe there to be no choice – I work to pay the mortgage, the bills and, ironically, the childcare costs. However, I totally accept that it is extremely difficult for many single parents – those with more than one child, those with children who've suffered prolonged periods of illness, those without the benefit of understanding employers and colleagues and those whose rates of pay fall well below the national average.

Instead of the Government alienating lone parents, once again, they should initially have looked at means-testing benefit claimants across the board to reduce costs. I myself am eligible for £68.40 per month, which, although very nice, is not necessary to my survival.

SARAH SMITH
London SE22

Sir: Harriet Harman says: "Lone mothers want to work for the same reason as married women work – for a better standard of living for their children." As a doctor and as the father of three children, I say if women really want to provide a better standard of living for their children they should aim to stay at home to provide the love that children need, like plants need water, and not worry about the specious claims of advertisers and feminists.

The most important job to be done in this life is to parent one's children and if the mother, whether Cabinet minister, lawyer, doctor, nurse or cleaner, tires herself out doing a job of secondary importance, her ability to nurture her children will be severely compromised.

Strong families produce strong individuals – weak families produce weak individuals. C. STEPHEN FROST
Colwyn Bay, Chwyd

Sir: The approach the Government is taking to the problem of single mothers is quite wrong. What they conspicuously need is not work or benefit, but a rich husband.

Research conclusively indicates that the wives of men with substantial off-shore investments are considerably better off than those on benefit or in work. What is needed, clearly, is a series of targeted Welfare to Marriage initiatives. Dataline could be contracted to provide suitable introductions. Tax incentives would be required and the laws on bigamy may have to be relaxed to allow public-spirited men to support more than one wife.

These generous and compassionate proposals are at least as sensible as those before Parliament.

PHIL TROY
Alcester, Warwickshire

Destructive badgers

Sir: If there is doubt about badgers spreading bovine TB (report, 11 December; Letters, 6 December) there is no doubt about the massive damage that badgers are doing to gardens in Somerset.

Before the moratorium on culling was initiated in 1973 badger numbers were kept low by farmers and landowners. Then, freed from predation, badgers multiplied rapidly. They moved into my garden in 1990, taking fruit, vegetables and flower bulbs. They fouled the paths with dung and exterminated garden-friendly wildlife such as hedgehogs and slow-worms.

Across Somerset, 145 gardeners open their gardens to the public under the National Gardens Scheme. I questioned 54 of them: 81 per cent had a badger problem similar to mine and getting worse.

The survey by the People's Trust for Endangered Species interpreted the 77 per cent increase in the British badger population since 1988 as a "recovery" from low levels caused by gamekeepers in the 19th century. This is incorrect. Somerset parish accounts for the 17th and 18th centuries frequently itemise payments for the destruction of "vermin" (animals which robbed land-hungry peasants of their produce). Badgers were worth

a shilling each, a fortune to a peasant.

Badger meat was always a delicacy, to man and in earlier centuries to wolves and other carnivores. So badgers never swarmed unmolested across England, and the current population increase is not a recovery.

It follows that badgers are commoner now than ever before. Conversely, farmers and gardeners have never been so powerless to resist their destructiveness.

Dr WILLIE STANTON
Westbury-sub-Mendip, Somerset

Trains by road

Sir: There is a good reason why Dr N P Meyer (letter, 11 December) saw a train being transported by road. The high track access charges imposed by Railtrack under the privatisation agreements have led to the preposterous position whereby it is often cheaper to transport trains needing repair on low-loaders than to haul them over the track.

This is the same sort of internal pricing structure which has caused BBC radio programme makers to find it cheaper to go out and buy CDs than to rent them from the BBC record library.

Clearly, logic plays little part in public service businesses. M A REDHEAD
London N8

Sir: With the sight of railway engines being transported by lorry becoming increasingly common I don't think Dr N P

Meyer will have to wait too long before he sees carriages, full of people, being carried in a similar manner for the same reasons.

GEOFF COX
Rugby, Warwickshire

Fuel of the future

Sir: You comment (Business Outlook, 4 December) that "the Government should admit that coal has no future".

Taking the world as a whole coal is almost certainly the fuel of the future. Reserves of coal are about 10 times the reserves of oil, and coal will still be available long after both oil and gas have been exhausted. It therefore must make sense to keep our productive mines open now rather than have them shut so that the reserves they contain are permanently closed off.

Germany, whose coal is far more expensive to produce than ours, recognises this and subsidises its coal industry to keep it going.

CHRIS DODWELL
Ashford, Middlesex

Charming

Sir: Donald MacIntyre thinks "Blair is rather good at using charm" (Comment, 9 December). Which leads to the conclusion that Camus predicted the nature of the Blairite success in *The Fall*: "You know what charm is: a way of getting the answer yes without having asked any clear question."

MICHAEL HARRIS
Manchester

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Letters I need to answer individually are treated as follows: stuffed in a plastic file, which is stuffed into my briefcase, and then dealt with via tape recorder as I go home at night. This is normally effective – the system, of course, not the answers – but it does mean a few get lost. Many essential things seem to slide into the all-purpose mulch of forgotten hills, sweet-wrappings, corporate memoranda and similar scumpled detritus in life's trouser turn-ups.

One missive I read but have lost was a complaint about Paul McCann's description of the artist Tracey Emin a week ago. McCann said that she was on television "as drunk as a Clyde welder with the language to match". The reader said he was a welder and had worked on the Clyde and found the comparison deeply offensive to Clyde welders. Well, I see the point. A lot of welders would object to being compared to salt-tongued conceptual artists. Soon we will be saying, "as drunk as a neomaterialist, with the language to match". Mr McCann points out, however, that his granddad was a Clyde welder and he knows a thing or two about the subject.

This, however, touches again on the whole question of readers' complaints and how newspapers deal with them. This week *The Guardian* sent us the conclusion of a lengthy report by its new ombudsman into the behaviour of its deputy foreign editor Victoria Brittain. Her bank account has been used to ferry money from the Libyans to fund a libel action against the paper by the former head of the Ghanaian security service, a chum of hers called Kojko Tsikata. Rum stuff, you will agree. The libel action against us continues.

The ombudsman accepted her assurances that she had no idea of where the chunky sums of money came from and hadn't asked her friend Tsikata – though he

says this last "appears curious". He has established that Brittain actively managed the money and talked "in the most general terms" about the libel case with the lawyer concerned but concludes that she was "some way from being a significant player" in the action against *The Independent*. She was silly, naive and behaved "inappropriately as a senior journalist". But not a bad woman.

Putting to one side my own feelings on the matter – I think Brittain behaved rather worse than "inappropriately" – does this first major report vindicate the use of an ombudsman? Alan Rusbridger, appointed *The Guardian's* one for good and honourable reasons and allowed a highly critical report about one of his journalists to be published in other papers – and all credit to him for that.

So, should *The Independent* appoint an ombudsman too? Well, as it happens, we used to: Sir Gordon Downey, who ombuds'd MPs, cut his teeth in this respect on *Indy* hacks. But in the end, during Andreas Whitman Smith's time as editor, we decided to end the practice. Why? Simply because we felt that it was the editor's job to investigate, discipline and respond directly. Newspapers are dictatorships, benign or otherwise, and the ombudsman couldn't take the editor's decisions for him. If the editor was wrong, or dilatory, or simply tried to hide the newspaper's failings, then he in turn would be dealt with either by the Press Complaints Commission or the board of the company.

This rule adds an hour or two to a conscientious editor's day but still seems to me to be broadly right. I have no one else to pass complaints to for investigation, or conclusion. On the other hand, of course, I can always lose them among the sweetie-wrappings.

Andrew Marr

QUOTE UNQUOTE

I don't want my party to become as terrified, as dependent on one person, as Labour has become on Tony Blair – William Hague, Tory leader

I wasn't put in to this job to wring my hands and beat my chest and discuss when I last cried – Harriet Harman, Social Security Secretary

I look forward to seeing a thousand Conservative consciences bloom as we look at the proper, accurate, fair reform of the welfare state – John Major, former Prime Minister

I think I've attained such a level of celebrity status that cinema can only lessen it – Eric Cantona, former Manchester United soccer star, contemplating whether he is now too important to become a film star

Painting will always be there, but with photographs you can take millions and millions of images, whereas in painting you can cook up – Gillian Wearing, whose video "Sixty Minutes' Silence" won her the Turner Prize

It's obviously not the comeback he had in mind but until then I thought he had done a sound job – Nigel Spackman, Sheffield United boss, after Michel Vank marked his return after a year out by scoring an own goal and getting sent off

It's official: men are brutes, women are a higher life form



DAVID
AARONOVITCH
THE FEMALE ORGASM

There was an article in this newspaper yesterday about a woman who once suffered involuntary orgasms. Inevitably, like all newspaper articles concerning the female orgasm, it was illustrated by that scene from the movie *When Harry Met Sally* in which Sally demonstrates to Harry - in a packed diner - how the female climax can be faked. (It's an interesting feature of our relative attitudes to these things that there is no corresponding image that could accompany a piece concerning the male orgasm. But if I'm wrong, I do not wish to be corrected.)

Now, many people - mostly younger men - have orgasms when they are not exactly ready. Time, or the recital of the *England* World Cup squad, usually overcomes this problem. But that is not what we are talking about. No, imagine for a moment what it would be like to have orgasms completely out of the blue - WHAM - just like that, with no warning, and no matter what you were doing.

It would be inconvenient, would it not? Experiencing an orgasm might be difficult to disguise from fellow passengers in lifts and trains, or from colleagues at work. The tell-tale flush, the stertorous breathing, the sudden cries of "Oh God, darling, I love you!" might each individually not betray you, but combined would certainly raise eyebrows. Friends might stop inviting you to their dinner parties, for fear of what might happen as you were introduced to Germaine Greer, say, or Trevor Phillips.

The embarrassment, however, would be as nothing compared with the considerable dangers. It is perilous enough to sneeze while driving on the motorway: the eyes close for a fraction of a second, the body convulses, and - a-tishoo - bang, into the back of that Lada. So what would happen were you to find yourself in the throes of an unexpected sexual experience - involving (depending on gender) rapid tumescence, vast stimulation and climax - hardly bears thinking about. One thing alone is certain: were the condition to become widespread, many more cars would display stickers bearing the legend, "Keep your distance".

It is little wonder, then, that the woman concerned (let us call her Ms X) eventually went to her doctor, and - some time after-

wards - appeared as a case discussed in the latest edition of *The Lancet*. For what the boffins discovered when they scanned Ms X's brain was very interesting. As our own health editor explained, she had a "deformed artery in the right temporal pole of the brain". This had ruptured, causing epilepsy, which in turn had triggered the orgasms. This knowledge meant that doctors could more accurately pinpoint the part of the brain that controls the female orgasm. And it is located in one of the most sophisticated and evolutionarily advanced bits.

But the male orgasm isn't. That is (for want of a better word) the rub. For, in the single known case of involuntary orgasm in a man, the problem was clearly linked back to the hypothalamus. And, in brain terms, apparently you don't get much more primitive and basic than the hypothalamus. We blokes had hypothalami when we were fish.

Are you getting this? We should conclude from all this that the male orgasm is ancient, animal, and instinctive. A necessary occurrence, it is no more a product of consciousness than is peristalsis. It is a thing of caves and sloping foreheads, a necessary and unlovely thing, that can be invoked without disturbing the intellect. This explains why boys can have orgasms in their sleep.

The female orgasm, on the other hand, is a product of evolution, of civilisation almost. It is not essential for procreation, but it requires subtle interaction between the brain and the body. Indeed, it is - as the deputy editor remarked to me yesterday - of a "higher order".

This raises two thoughts. Well, one question and a thought.

The question is, why did the female orgasm develop at all? What is it for? Most physiological changes to the human body have happened for a reason, so what's the reason here? Was the problem that, as humanity evolved, and poetry, music and art were first developed, the sensitive females found themselves extremely unwilling to submit to the animal ministrations of a whole lot of self-pleasuring males? Was the orgasm thus conjured into being by a Nature that regarded it as a way of giving women a stake in intercourse?

And here's the thought. What if the female orgasm is still evolving? The male one, stuck down there in the horrid old hypothalamus, is becalmed sometime in the Mesozoic period or whatever, while the female one could be becoming ever more complex, culturally differentiated and - let's face it, given world overpopulation - bloody difficult to provoke. One day, only male novelists, scientists or journalists of exquisite manners and enormous beauty, will be able to induce orgasm externally in the most ordinary woman. Which may be fine for me, but is a bit rough on the rest of you.

While you digest that one, I'd better tell you how Ms X's story ended. The medicals prescribed a drug called Carbamazepine, used in the treatment of epilepsy, and soon the unwanted comings went. She is said to be much happier and calmer.

But, given where we may all be heading, wouldn't it now be appropriate for scientists to search for and discover a drug to produce the opposite effect? It could be of immense benefit to many couples - especially in these days when we all have so little time - if they had access to something that might speed up the female response. I am assured, by those that know, that it would certainly beat the Squeeze Technique.

Yes, it's nannyish, but remember what we said about seat belts



STEVE
CROWSHAW
BANNING
THINGS

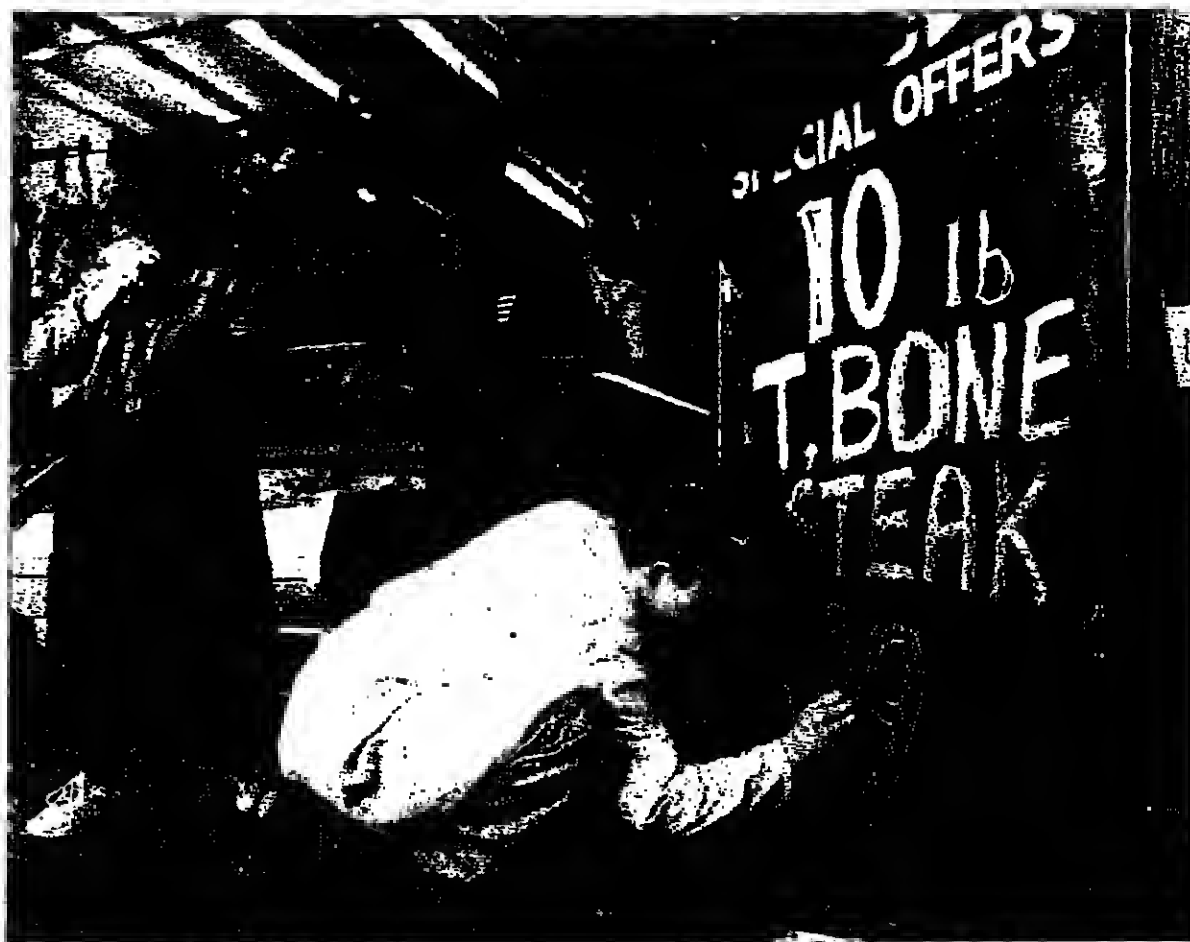
The list already gives the impression of being endless. And still, it gets longer. Ban follows ban - and the protests get louder. Preposterous, absurd, surreal. The words of condemnation for the new culture of interference come pouring out, day after day.

The latest proposal - that video games should carry a warning of the dangers of reckless driving - comes hard on the heels of a host of other equally pernicious rules, each of which seems more startling than the last. We are about to see the death of the T-bone steak (because of the alleged risk of the human disease CJD), the death of the doorstep (bad for the disabled), and the end of tobacco advertising as we know it. After last week's T-bone ruling, this week it seems that some cuts of lamb are next in line for the (proverbial) chop.

Things have got so bad that William Hill bookmakers say they are "tempted" by the idea of offering odds on what ban might come next. The next target might be unpasteurised milk (which is already banned in Scotland). There is even a lurking threat against some exotic fruit, because of the risk that they may bring tropical diseases into the country.

The response to all this rule-making has been high indignation. In the words of John Casey, a fellow of Caius College, Cambridge, writing in the *Evening Standard* this week: "The nanny state continues its advance in seven-league, hand-knitted jackboots." John Adams, professor of geography at University College, London and author of a book on risk, believes that we have reached an absurd stage, if the individual's freedom is so severely restricted. "If you're going to criminalise health risks, where on earth do you stop? The sale of tobacco, the sale of alcohol - the eating of cream huns?"

When it comes to beef on the bone, many in this country clearly share Professor Adams'



view. On hearing the announcement that T-bone steaks would soon be a thing of the past, Britons rushed out to buy them while the going was still good. "While stocks last" seemed almost to be a selling point. British meat producers yesterday announced a challenge to "taste the difference" between and homeless joints and meat cooked on the bone - the politically correct and the illicit charmer of the meat-eater's world respectively.

Many argue that the question of risk is a matter for the individual - at least as long as the individual is properly informed. None the less, that argument has been heard on different occasions over the years; it has rarely seemed relevant, in hindsight.

When seatbelts were made compulsory in 1983, opponents of the legislation insisted that this was an unacceptable violation of individual rights. They wanted the right to be thrown through a windscreen, and (allegedly) survive. The same argument was heard over crash helmets. People insisted that they should not have to wear crash helmets if they did not want to. A tiny minority still hold that view. But the great majority have long since accepted that the inconvenience is small, by comparison with the potential benefit to all.

Only 10 years ago, drink-driving was considered social-

ly acceptable, and the laws against it were seen by many as intrusive. But that, too, has changed. People accept the law as entirely natural. The freedom to drink and drive is considered no more desirable than the freedom to kill one's neighbour.

I admit: I would (occasionally) like to eat beef on the bone. I would like, too, to be allowed to eat unpasteurised cheese, in full knowledge of the risks. Governments may sometimes be inclined to wish to impose a ban too far. But is that really worse than all the occasions when government has imposed a ban too few?

Pressure groups are ready to call for bans, at the drop of a hat. But commercial groups which have vested interests in risks not being fully discussed are more powerful still. After all, the risks of asbestos and the risks of Thalidomide were not addressed until it was far too late - partly because powerful lobbies conspired to keep things that way.

More recently, the British government was determined just a few years ago to show that the worries about mad cow disease in meat were just down to a few irrelevant whingers. The political and economic knock-on effect of any ban would clearly be painful; ergo, a ban was out of the question. It was an absurd logic. The famous burger-feeding session by John Gummer to his daughter Cordelia was down to a deter-

mination to look the other way. In retrospect (but not just in retrospect) it was woefully wrong to do so.

If the present government has gone too far the other way, we should not jump too quickly to condemnation. The ban on handguns may appear to have been just an emotional (read "immature") reaction to the slaughter at Dunblane. But it seems unlikely that any future government will wish to reverse the strict new gun-law legislation, any more than any government would seek to overturn the laws on child labour or on environmental protection. That must be the most important test of whether legislation is sane or insane: in time, does it come to seem a bizarre aberration, or does it come to seem perfectly normal?

We now take health warnings on cigarettes for granted - smokers and non-smokers alike would be startled if the warnings were absent. As for the latest ruling, that new houses should be built without doorsteps, thus making access easier for the disabled - what on earth, one might ask, is all the fuss about? Planning laws have long sought to make life easier and safer for all. Some-

times, the rules - exactly how steep stairs are allowed to be, how the railings should be designed - may seem pointless. But pointless rules eventually fall by the wayside. Hundreds and thousands of sensible rules remain - for our collective good.

We sometimes like to boast, with teenage bravado, that we understand everything well enough by ourselves. We're grown-ups who don't need anybody to tell us what to do. The law-makers come to seem like an irritating Big Brother. In reality, the "default" setting is more often to do nothing - because we understand nothing. Mr Gummer's grisly photo-opportunity with Cordelia was the clearest illustration of complacent ignorance that one could ask for.

The new Freedom of Information Act will at least reduce the chances of such a disastrous rerun of the BSE catastrophe, where the Government made a speciality of being economical with the truth. If we know what is happening, then we will already be better equipped to deal with the risks. Protests at new legislation are intended to be libertarian; they are in danger of merely sounding petulant.

Marginalised masses, can it be that your time has come?



TREVOR
PHILLIPS
SOCIAL
EXCLUSION

Tony Blair may not think of himself as more radical than Ken Livingstone, but on Monday he opened a political Pandora's box that dwarfs the revolution of 1997. The name "Social Exclusion Unit" suggests that the dozen or so civil servants involved will now concentrate their attention on ensuring that upper-crust dinner parties have the requisite quota of black single mothers.

I'm all for that. It would certainly be pleasingly annoying to some people. But it is a policy to be carried out by a social secretary, not a Secretary of State. However, the launch of the unit signals a chance for a genuine revolution, beside which the demand to retain all home parent

benefits is a timid, Menshevik thing. You would expect the dangerous lefties to be focused on the former, yet the left seems to have forgotten the point of being left-wing. The revolt on benefits for lone parents was never going to achieve fundamental change.

It was bound to fail, since the Tories had made it clear that they would back the Government. Have Ken and Co forgotten the words of General Giap, the great tactician who won the Vietnam war? "Fight to win; fight only if victory is certain." The upshot of this week's exercise looks like being a Government victory, followed by a period of savage revenge against the rebels. In exchange for what? Two days' headlines.

But the Government could have done better. Work is preferable to benefit; but it looks careless to devise a system by which women risk losing benefit if they do work, and then, through no fault of their own, lose their jobs.

It also seems overly harsh to turn down an exemption for the parents of under-fives. Do we really want to compel mothers to work in those first, vital years? Close parental attention may well be the only way to break the tragic cycle of underachievement that is the true achievement of the underclass, and mark of the underclass, which ends up costing the rest

of us billions in remedial education, crime control and further welfare benefits.

All that said, if the level of ambition of the most radical Labour MPs is to safeguard a tenuous week for a relatively small number of families, then the ruling classes have little to worry about. If I were an aristocrat or a powerful plutocrat, I would be happily sipping my favourite tipple and reflecting on what a jolly good thing this socialism lark can be, when practised properly.

I might, however, be kept awake at nights if the Social Exclusion Unit turned out to be a lively infant. There could be a truly revolutionary agenda for the unit. But first, we need to understand what is meant by social exclusion. For this is not solely about poverty, or even about race; it is about power.

What people are being excluded from is the ability to take decisions about their own lives. Poverty certainly can produce that result - but is not the only path to alienation. In modern Britain, it isn't even the most common route. Take, for example, the result of some work carried out by (inevitably) the think-tank Demos last year. It showed that the most alienated and powerless group of people in our society was not young, black, unemployed men, as you might expect: it was young,

employed women in the C2 economic bracket.

When you translate that into secretaries, typists and receptionists, you begin to see why. These young women hear all the time that they are the coming thing, yet their working lives are ruled entirely by the whims of their bosses: there's not a lot of Girl Power in the average workplace. At home their lives are constrained by the demands of their male partners, by their children, and, increasingly, by the needs of their ageing parents. In all sorts of ways, they are socially excluded. No amount of money available from the state could empower them individually. These people don't need redistribution of wealth. What they need is a workplace that gives them freedom to take initiatives and to use their talents.

Then there is exclusion driven by snobbery and tradition. We all know that there are clubs which we cannot join: some of them literally are clubs, to which women are not admitted. But, more broadly, there are networks, to which most of us could not gain admission no matter how much money we had, and no matter how brilliant we were - that is, assuming we even knew they existed.

The unit might, for example, consider the extent to which the

senior ranks of the Civil Service are dominated by Oxbridge graduates; there would be a basis for the PM to force mandarins to search more widely for his new mandarins. We might say the same for the clubs of public schoolboys who run our armed forces, or the political parties that exert a stranglehold on our local democracy.

Think, too, of the millions who are excluded by thoughtless bureaucracy or prejudice. Most of us now take for granted that you can get cash out of a hole in the wall, or that you can pay bills by cheque; increasingly, both private and public sector take it for granted that customers have bank accounts, and privilege them for using their accounts - discounts for direct debit, for example. But what if you can't get a bank account? You may have had a prison sentence; or you may not, in these days of portfolio working, be able to show six months' regular income. Every day tasks become more difficult; you are greeted by suspicion, and you can be crippled by your inability to use any money you do earn. That's social exclusion.

Then there is fear; how can an elderly person trapped in his home play a part in our society? Many of these people are by no means poverty-stricken; but they are cut out of the social involvement most of us take for

granted, because they are frail and scared. That's social exclusion. They don't need more money; they need families or caring neighbours. It probably needs volunteers, not cash. Similarly, those who cannot read properly are left outside the loop. That's social exclusion, often caused by bad teaching.

The question for the Prime Minister is whether he and his unit can see beyond the many demands for cash that are no doubt already landing on the mat. One good sign is that the unit has no money of its own: a budget would merely encourage officials to find ways of spending it. Instead they need to find better ways of spending the money that is already in ministers' hands.

Mr Blair is severely disabled in appreciating the extent of the task: he was born with talent and material advantage, and he is a white, male professional; there is nothing in his make-up that allows him to know what it feels like to be an outsider, and certainly it is some time since he will have felt powerless. We will know whether he is a great politician or just a nice one, if his genuine empathy for the excluded goes beyond the hand-outs for the poor; and if he finds a way to smash down the closed circles of power that dominate our society.

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You don't need luck, you need a PENTAX

South West Water piles into landfill business

South West Water yesterday became the country's largest waste disposal group when it bought Terry Adams, an Exeter-based landfill operator, for a maximum sum of £105m. Peter Thal Larsen explains how the utility plans to make brass from muck.

The water utility will initially pay £77m for Terry Adams, which operates 12 landfill sites in Somerset, Manchester and Derbyshire. A further £28m payment depends on the group receiving planning permission for another five sites.

The company's founder and managing director - also called Terry Adams - and his family stand to make £95m if the full amount is paid. Although South West Water executives will run the enlarged business, Mr Adams will carry on in an advisory role.

Terry Adams currently has spare space for 49m cubic metres of landfill, but has planning permission for just 17m cubic metres.



The new landfill sites complement South West Water's existing landfills, which are mostly in East Anglia and along the South Coast

Photograph: Brian Harris

If South West Water gets planning approval for all its void space it will overtake Shanks & McEwan, currently the country's largest landfill operator.

Analysis said the price South West Water paid for the space looked cheap when compared with recent deals in the industry. However, South West Water's shares closed down 1p at 92p as investors concluded that the group was now less likely to mount a share buyback.

The company said that uncertainty over the forthcoming regulatory review of the industry would limit its ability to gear up its balance sheet. "We are keeping our powder dry," said Colin Drummond, managing director of South West Water's enterprise division. Analysts believe the company will not buy back shares while the review is going on, suggesting the group will not make a move before 1999 at the earliest.

The new landfill sites complement South

West Water's existing landfills, which are mostly in East Anglia and along the South Coast. All these regions are expected to experience a shortage of landfill space in future.

South West Water is likely to raise Terry Adams' price. "In our view the price Terry Adams charges per tonne of waste, in areas where demand is strong, is rather low," said Mr Drummond. He said Terry Adams would also benefit from South West's ability to win planning applications. The group has won

four of the last five applications it has submitted.

An added advantage is that Terry Adams' landfills only accept active waste like domestic rubbish. They enjoy better margins than sites which accept so-called inert waste such as building rubble.

Mr Drummond said the introduction of the government's landfill tax had not affected demand for active waste landfill - which is largely supplied by local authorities - de-

spite a doubling in charges. In contrast, demand for inert landfill has fallen sharply as a result of the tax.

Mr Drummond said the acquisition was part of South West Water's strategy of building up its profits from unregulated activities. In the year to last March the divisions which fall outside the industry regulator's control made operating profits of £12.9m, compared to a £11.7m contribution from the regulated Water & Sewage business.

Seoul plunges to ten-year low as confidence ebbs

The Asian financial crisis deepened yesterday as the South Korean and Indonesian currencies and stock markets suffered another major fall. As Stephen Vines reports from Hong Kong, the scale of the problem has raised concern among European experts while the rescue package for South Korea is generating opposition.

The South Korean stock market shuddered down to a 10-year low as blue chips plunged by 7 per cent and the local currency, the won, lost yet another 10 per cent of its value in early trading.

The country opened its bond market to greater foreign investment, the day before rules for foreign ownership of listed companies were relaxed. These measures have long been urged on the Korean government but when they were implemented, foreign buyers resolutely shied away and their introduction was lost during another punishing day on Seoul's financial markets.

Poking its finger in the gaping hole caused by an almost to-

tal lack of confidence in the government's fiscal policy, the central bank went back on its pledge not to try to stabilise the won by intervening in foreign exchange markets and made a costly foray yesterday, costing an estimated \$200m, in an attempt to stop the won going into total free fall. On Thursday the government admitted that it only had \$10bn left in foreign exchange reserves, so it could ill afford the extravagance of intervening in the market.

The situation in Korea is now so bad that practically every action taken by the government is almost immediately undermined by fresh news of disaster. Yesterday it announced that the Monetary Board would extend loans of \$6.45bn to banks, merchant banks, investment trust companies and securities firms. Hours before the announcement it was clear that it had come too late to rescue Korea's four largest securities houses Dongsuh Securities, part of the Kukdong Group, the country's 31st largest conglomerate. The failure of Dongsuh followed last week-end's announcement that Coyo Securities was also going out of business.

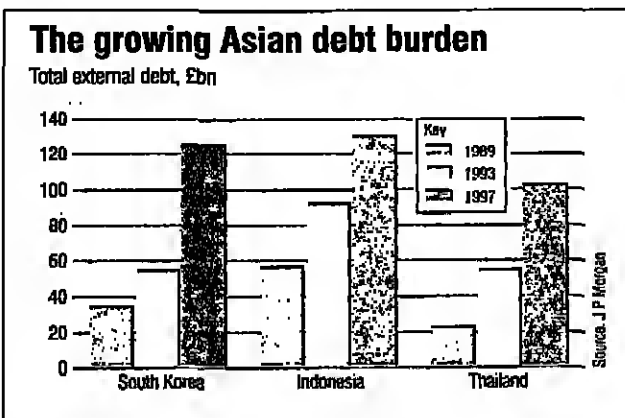
Doubts about the ailing government's ability to handle the crisis have been exacerbated by the slow arrival of funds from

the \$57bn International Monetary Fund (IMF) rescue package. In addition, there is growing feeling that, although this is the largest rescue package in history, it will not be sufficient to bail out the Korean economy.

While Koreans contemplate these problems, demonstrators were out on the streets of Seoul protesting against the IMF. These demonstrations reflect a growing mood in the region where the IMF conditions for rescuing East Asian economies are coming under increasingly critical scrutiny.

Newspapers across the region are running a slew of articles by academics, businessmen and others questioning whether the IMF's insistence on tight monetary policy is really the best way of curing the Asian patients. They argue that the underlying economic strength of the region will be undermined by the lack of availability of funds for investment.

Thailand, Indonesia and South Korea have had to resort to IMF rescues in past months, and the Philippines is yet to emerge from an earlier IMF rescue. The region's most vocal critic of the IMF is the Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahatir Mohamad, who believes that it is using its financial



muscle to allow Western institutions into previously protected developing markets to buy out price assets.

Meanwhile in Indonesia, where the IMF rescue has yet to restore confidence, the markets reacted with alarm yesterday when it was announced that ill health would prevent President Suharto from attending a regional heads of state meeting this weekend.

Mirroring the falls in Seoul, the local currency lost 10 per cent of its value and share prices sank by over 7 per cent. This brings the stockmarket down to 1993 levels and gave the currency its biggest one day fall against the dollar. The rupiah has lost around a quarter of its value since the IMF was called in at the beginning of October and has halved in value over the past year.

Most other Asian markets were down yesterday but Hong Kong again showed its ability to surprise with the stockmarket managing a near 2 per cent rise, after the previous day's fall of 5.5 per cent. Trying to make sense of this kind of volatility will inevitably lead to frustration.

Meanwhile, analysts said

Asia's financial crisis was expected to cut European Union growth by as much as half a percentage point and lead central banks to pursue a more benign rate policy. Concerns in Europe were focused primarily on South Korea and the knock-on effects the financial panic there will have on other countries in the region, particularly Japan.

Amid a less robust growth outlook, analysts expected European monetary authorities to shy away from tightening policy aggressively. Most now reckon that a rise in short-term German interest rates will come about some time in the first or second quarter of 1998.

Most economists said the slower pace of EU growth represented a "best case" scenario, one that assumed a timely resolution to Asia's difficulties and avoided a more dire and global systemic problem.

Should the situation worsen beyond expectations, however, it is anyone's guess how events might unfold. The most frightening scenario is a situation in which an Asian country failed to honour its debt - a fear that is beating up in South Korea as it struggles to secure additional outside funding.

Safeway prepares for bid from Asda

Safeway was on bid alert last night as speculation persisted that the rival supermarkets group Asda was considering launching a hostile takeover. A merger of the two companies would create Britain's biggest supermarket chain. Michael Harrison reports.

Rumours swept the market yesterday that Asda was raising a large amount of bank debt in readiness to strike for Safeway. An Asda spokeswoman categorically denied that the group was putting together a debt facility. But Safeway and its financial advisers were still said to be ready to mount a vigorous bid defence.

Talks about a £9bn merger of the two companies collapsed in September after news of the discussions leaked and it became apparent that any deal would almost certainly have been referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

A merger between the two would create a supermarket giant with 15.3 per cent of the UK's £85bn-a-year food retailing market, 600 stores and 125,000 employees, outstripping Tesco and Sainsbury in size.

At the time of the abortive merger talks, Safeway said a combination of the two groups would produce savings of about £200m a year through the combination of purchasing, information technology and marketing budgets. There would also be the region of 1,000 to 1,500 job losses.

The rationale behind the merger would be to create a third force in the UK supermarket capable of taking on the two market leaders, particularly in the South-east, where Tesco controls 70 per cent of the superstore market. Asda has an ambitious campaign to double its chain of hypermarkets with 13 new openings by 1999.

However, a hostile bid would still be fraught with complications. Archie Norman, the Asda chairman, is deputy chairman of the Conservative party. The President of the Board of Trade Margaret Beckett has gained a reputation for blocking mergers which reduce competition and is thought almost certain to refer any Asda-Safeway deal to the MMC.

Since the collapse of the merger talks Safeway has slipped in value from £4.3bn to £3.7bn while Asda's stock market capitalisation has grown from £4.9bn to £5.2bn.

Power chiefs summoned for coal talks

The heads of Britain's biggest power generators and Richard Budge of RJB Mining have been summoned to a meeting with the Paymaster General Geoffrey Robinson on Monday to thrash out a deal to keep the pits open.

All three coal-fired generators - National Power, PowerGen and Eastern - will attend the meeting at the Treasury, which is scheduled to start mid-afternoon and continue until an agreement has been struck.

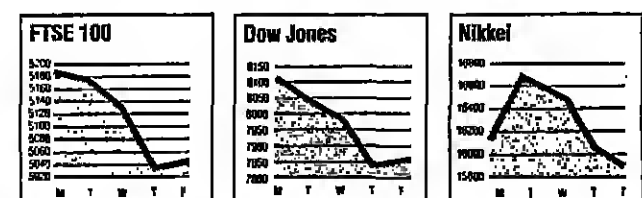
The meeting follows the confusion which surrounded Tony Blair's Commons announcement last week that an agreement had been reached

between the generators and that Mr Budge that would keep all RJB's pits open until next June. Despite the Prime Minister's statement, it quickly emerged that no agreement had been reached and that none of the generators had signed up to take more coal supplies from RJB.

Mr Robinson has been trying to broker a deal for the past fortnight to avoid the political embarrassment of heavy job losses being announced in the coal industry in the run-up to Christmas.

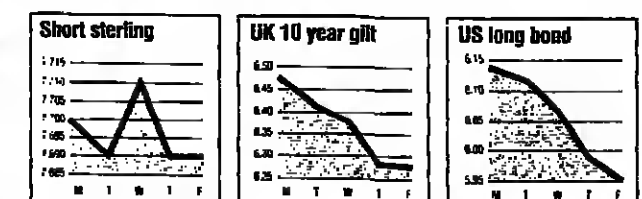
It is feared that half of RJB's 17 deep mines could close with 5,000 job losses.

STOCK MARKETS



Index	Close	Change	Change (%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	5045.20	-9.30	-0.19	5367.30	3933.90	3.48
FTSE 250	4757.90	-4.10	-0.09	4963.80	4347.30	3.43
FTSE 350	2431.70	-4.10	-0.17	2670.50	1958.10	3.48
FTSE All Share	2375.46	-3.82	-0.16	2507.68	1845.17	3.47
FTSE SmallCap	2300.60	-1.80	-0.08	2407.40	2127.50	3.41
FTSE Hedges	1253.00	-3.10	-0.25	1346.50	1203.20	3.39
FTSE AIM	974.00	-1.10	-0.11	1138.00	865.90	1.10
Dow Jones	7854.21	-5.22	-0.07	8288.03	6288.03	1.74
Nikkei	15804.30	-145.85	-0.91	20910.79	14968.13	0.97
Hong Kong	10814.66	194.44	1.87	16820.31	8775.88	4.00
Dax	4082.60	62.44	1.50	4458.89	2797.54	1.96

INTEREST RATES

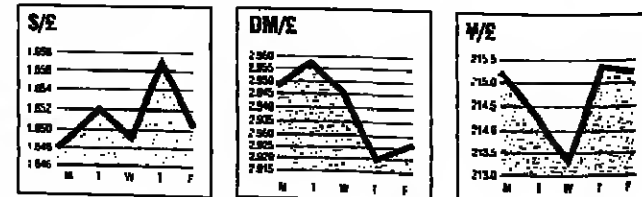


Money Market Rates	3 months	6 months	1 year	1 yr 6m	2 year	3 year	5 year	10 year
UK	7.73	7.34	7.81	0.92	6.28	-1.41	6.21	-1.57
US	5.81	0.36	6.01	0.25	6.77	-0.55	6.96	-0.67
Japan	0.77	0.30	0.72	0.14	1.90	-0.76	2.56	-0.71
Germany	3.76	0.52	4.07	0.77	5.29	-0.58	6.86	-0.89

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises	Price (p)	Qty (p)	% Chg	Falls	Price (p)	Qty (p)	% Chg
BTR	374.50	32.00	9.34	Ionics Grp	89.00	-8.50	-8.72
Silvapharma	55.50	4.00	7.77	Biocompatibles	595.00	-27.50	-4.42
Sedgwick	148.00	8.50	6.09	Rio Tinto	718.00	-32.00	-4.27
Brit Vita	245.50	8.50	4.03	Lorha	89.00	3.50	3.78

CURRENCIES



Pound	at 5pm	Change	Yr Ago	Dollar	at 5pm	Change	Yr Ago
Dollar	1.6504	-0.70c	1.6561	Sterling	0.6059	+0.25c	0.6038
D-Mark	2.9261	+0.38pf	2.6559	D-Mark	1.7733	+0.39pf	1.5404
Yen	215.26	+0.68	188.58	Yen	130.43	+0.96	113.40
E index	103.70	-0.10	93.10	S index	108.30	-0.10	97.90

OTHER INDICATORS

at 5pm	Close	Chg	Yr Ago	Index	Chg	Yr Ago	Nov
Brent Oil (\$)	16.99	0.12	22.42	GDP	113.90	3.80	109.7
Gold (\$)	282.55	-1.80	358.85	RPI	159.60	3.7	153.91
Silver (\$)	5.79	-0.27	4.83	Base Rates	7.25	6.00	

www.bloomberg.com

source: Bloomberg

Cavalry is on the way, but it may be too late

The announcement of the International Monetary Fund's massive rescue package for South Korea has failed dismally to stabilise the country's financial markets. Dione Coyle, Economics Editor, asks whether the IMF cavalry will win in the end.

Korea's top conglomerates

	Number of affiliates	Paid in capital (\$bn)	Total liabilities (\$bn)	Debt/equity ratio %
Hyundai	57	3,599 (1.27)	42,974 (14.90)	437
Samsung	80	3,772 (1.31)	36,897 (12.79)	267
LG	49	3,029 (1.05)	28,766 (9.97)	347
Daewoo	30	3,850 (1.33)	26,449 (9.17)	340
Sunkyoung	46	1,100 (0.38)	18,042 (6.26)	384

Two things have made the financial markets doubtful about whether the \$57bn (£34.5bn) emergency credit arranged for South Korea will be enough to bring the crisis to an end. One is the scale of the overseas debts the loan has to cover. The other is whether Seoul is willing to correct the policy mistakes that got it into such a mess in the first place.

South Korea's short-term overseas debts are now put at \$100bn, the bulk of its total debts. Although some of this reflects lending between branches of Korean banks and companies, some \$40bn is

thought to need refinancing in the next two weeks.

The IMF itself is putting forward \$21bn in credit, \$5.5bn of which it has already lent, with another \$5.58bn available by 8 January. If this turns out not to be enough to stabilise the currency, the World Bank will chip in with \$10bn. Japan \$10bn, the US \$5bn and the Asian Development Bank \$4bn.

Amongst six smaller lenders, Britain has offered to make available \$1.25bn if necessary via a loan from the Bank of England. The international offi-

cial who negotiated this package, the biggest emergency financing arrangement of its kind yet, believe that it is big enough - provided Seoul adheres to the conditions set down by the IMF. Indeed, they expect that none of the loans apart from the IMF contribution will actually need to be drawn.

Financial analysts are less convinced. Lim Chang Yuel, South Korea's finance minister, admitted the foreign currency reserves have fallen to just \$10bn, less than a single month's worth of imports. It is

not completely clear that the funds are in place to repay all the debts that will come due in the short term, even though the government has said it will guarantee all the corporate debts.

Even well-known names amongst the conglomerates, like LG and Hyundai, have debt-equity ratios in the region of 350-450 per cent, according to official statistics. The tighter interest rate policy the IMF has imposed on South Korea will push up the cost of servicing debts, causing serious cash-flow problems.

The real doubts, however, concern the prospects for implementation of the IMF conditions. Apart from the standard fund medicine of raising interest rates and slashing government budgets - the IMF being a great believer in the theory that if it isn't hurting it isn't working - these include restructuring the financial sector, opening the economy to more foreign trade and investment, redrawing the corporate sector and making the jobs market far more flexible.

This is no small programme, and any government would hesitate to embrace these terms - never mind a new government not involved in negotiating the deal in the first place.

Michel Camdessus, the IMF's managing director, has expressed his confidence that Seoul will stick to the deal. Privately, fund officials say the government will have no choice, because otherwise it will not get the emergency loans and would have to default on repayments.

Even so, many in the financial markets are highly critical of the South Korean government's attitude to the crisis. An analyst who did not wish to be named said: "We haven't yet seen any sign from the Korean authorities that they accept any responsibility for the crisis or are willing to take corrective actions." Few expect to get those signs before next week's election. But South Korea will have less than a month between then and the disbursement of the succeeding tranche of IMF credit in the New Year to persuade foreign investors that it is willing to be rescued.

Russia holds pot of gold for those who risk assault course

More than 400 British companies have decided that the benefits of investing in the new Russia outweigh the risks. Phil Reeves reports from Moscow on why the former Soviet Union holds Eastern promise for UK investors.

It is one of those announcements that sounds like a future Trivial Pursuit question, a tiny punctuation mark in history which we will one day look back on with damp-eyed affection. More than 30 years after first securing fridge space in swinging Britain, Tupperware has finally arrived in Russia.

The multinational is launching operations in St Petersburg with unabashed optimism. "The Tupperware career and earnings opportunity are being well received," boasted its chief executive, Rick Goings in his best business-speak.

His company is entering one of the toughest beats on the planet. On the one hand, there is the endemic corruption, bureaucracy, legislative chaos and (for some) the nightmare of distributing over a sparsely populated country that stretches across 11 time zones. On the other, there are 147 million new consumers, low labour costs, a highly educated population, and a large economy founded on vast natural resources.

So far, some 400 British companies have pondered this equation and concluded that the benefits outweigh the risks

— particularly in oil and gas. BP and Royal Dutch/Shell this month agreed to spend about \$4bn in Russia's under-financed oil sector, eclipsing all previous investments.

This is not to say that today's investors and businesses have no serious worries. A government corruption scandal has greatly weakened the Russian government's team of pro-western economists led by Anatoly Chubais, and will slow down reforms. And a battle is looming over the stability of the ruble; the crisis on the world markets, which has prompted an exodus of \$5bn of foreign money from the domestic T-bill market. To defend the currency, the Russian Central Bank is preparing to draw on its \$21.5bn reserves.

Yet businesses have seen worse threats come and go. In the three years since SmithKline Beecham has been in Russia, its sales have risen 800 per cent.

The Anglo-American health care company will this year sell something close to \$100m worth of cosmetics and pharmaceutical products into Russia which are imported from its western European plants. It knows the "headline" problems — the demands for protection money, the 500 annual contract killings, the stories about common dressing up as customs officers and taking delivery of lorriesloads of produce.

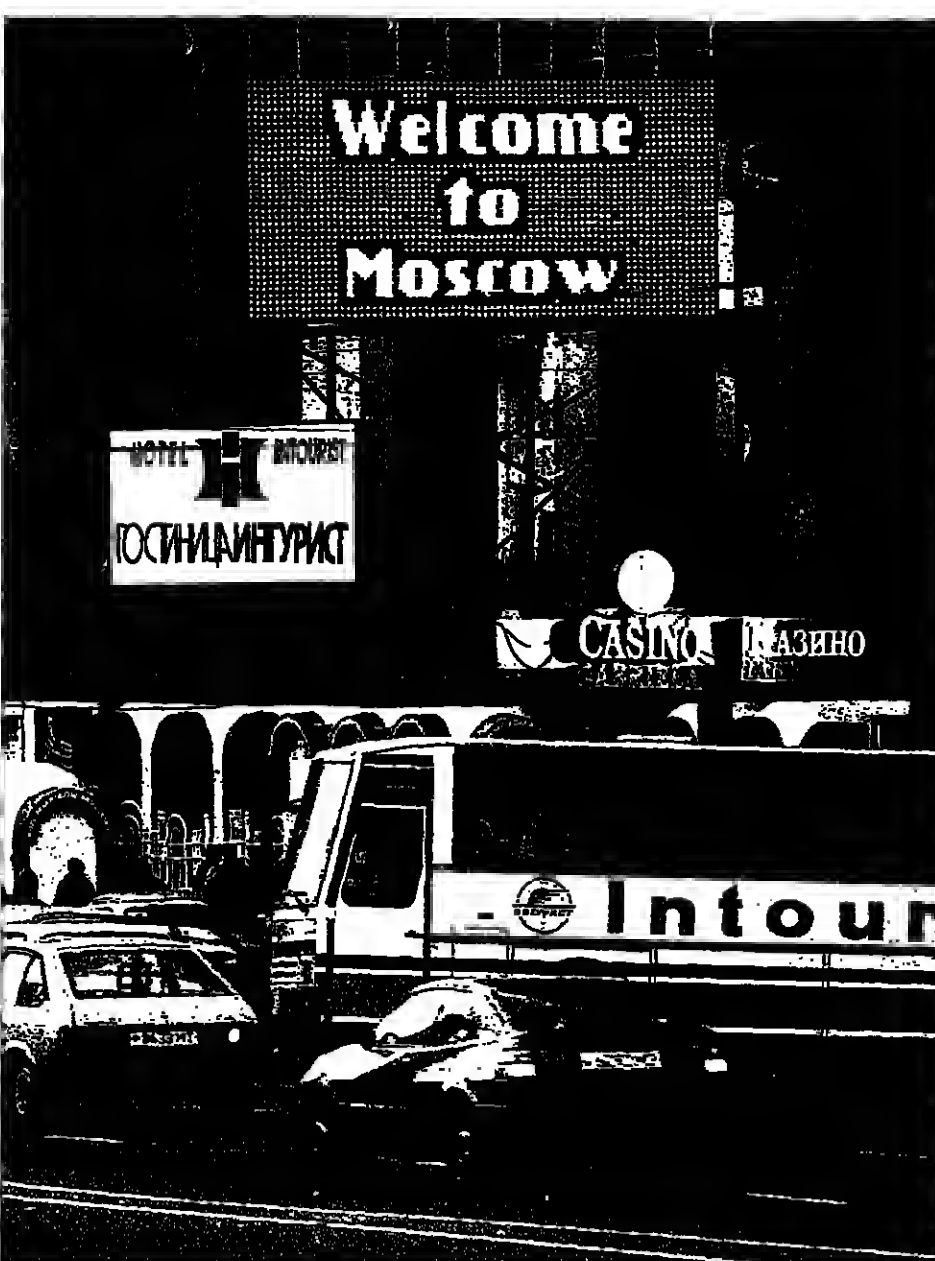
But the first two of these blights affect Russians far more than established foreign firms, and the last is relatively rare. Far less is said about the daily hurdles that they must overcome to trade successfully.

Take, for example, "parallel importing" and "grey customs clearance". When SmithKline Beecham imports a lorryload of toothpaste or headache pills, it pays import duties which are then passed on to the price-tag. Middle-men have found that they can market the same items cheaper in Russia by buying them from SmithKline Beecham in the West, and importing them independently — bribing the customs with a payoff which is much less than the duty. Thus, the company finds itself competing with its own products on Russian soil.

Nor are these the only unscrupulous rivals who eat away at profit margins of western consumer goods manufacturers. The markets of Russia and the former Soviet Union are packed with cheap imitation products produced in India and Turkey. "Look at this," said SmithKline's general manager in the former Soviet Union, Paul Carter, brandishing a Turkish-made toothbrush with the same shape and livery as Aquafresh brush, but with a different name. "I went to an outdoor market in St Petersburg where there were boxes and boxes of these. They were selling five for every one of ours as they were much cheaper."

But for most businesses foreigners are overshadowed by another overriding concern. "Ask me what's tough about Russia," said one western executive official, "and I will give you three answers. Tax, tax, and tax."

The chaos after the collapse of Soviet-style central planning spawned a system that is incomprehensible and



Risks and benefits: Western businesses are taking their chance in Russia

hugely abused. Typically, a law-abiding foreign company can expect to have to pay up to 100 of the country's more than 200 different taxes. Just charting a path through the labyrinth of different laws can prove baffling even to the best qualified accountants — and places a hefty burden on administrative costs. "There is a huge grey area where we are just not sure what

the right answer is," complained the same expatriate. Mistakes can be costly; the tax police have the power to seize assets, freeze bank accounts, and even suspend operating licences if a company fails to settle an alleged tax debt within a mere 10 days. Appealing against their rulings requires a long and costly trek through the courts. The system is also laden

with regulations that are tantamount to taxes on gross revenue rather than profit. It is into these perilous but profitable waters that Tupperware is now venturing. A pot of gold lies on the horizon, but so do plenty of landmines. Their sales staff may now be preparing for their first Russian Tupperware party, but it is far too soon to celebrate.

Jobs for life are an enduring fact

Jobs last as long on average in the 1990s as they did in the 1970s. New research debunks the myth that the job for life is history. Diane Coyle, Economics Editor, ponders whether this means insecurity really is all in the mind.

The average length of time for which people typically hold a job has scarcely changed over the past 20 years. On average, women stay in the same job for 12 years and men for 18 years.

The averages disguise a wide range of experiences, according to research published yesterday by the Centre for Economic Policy Research. For men, 24 per cent of jobs last more than 30 years, 40 per cent more than 20 years, but 24 per cent less than five years. Among women, 18 per cent stay in jobs for more than 20 years, but 41 per cent for less than five years.

However, these proportions have changed little over the years. Author Simon Burgess, an economist at the University of Bristol, said: "There is no strong tendency for shorter job tenures."

His research also established

that people with higher education are more likely to stay in jobs for only a short time. People with a degree are significantly more likely to stay in a job for less than a year and to move frequently. Women with pre-school children are the other group most likely to have been in a given job for less than 12 months.

A comparison across countries also suggests that jobs in the flexible UK labour market last longer than in Italy. The probability that a 35-year old man working in industry has been in the same job for at least five years is 53 per cent in Britain compared to 49 per cent in Italy.

Mr Burgess said: "Fears of a dramatic change in the nature of work, and the emergence of a new industrial peasantry, are overdone."

Similar evidence was used by the Conservative government before the election to claim that job insecurity was all in the mind. However, the new papers concede that insecurity might have other dimensions.

For example, the risk of unemployment has risen since the mid-1970s. Insecurity could also reveal itself in longer working hours, lower pay rises or shorter contracts, even if they are normally renewed.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Arrol-John (P)	5.08m (0.887m)	1.38m (0.227m)	0.47p (-)	- (-)
Banell (P)	38.8m (88.25m)	2.68m (1.44m)	1.2p (0.9p)	0.4p (0.3p)
Beaufort Group (P)	1.04m (1.57m)	0.103m (0.267m)	- (-)	- (-)
Braceway (P)	20.06m (18.81m)	1.04m (1.38m)	0.89p (1.12p)	0.31p (0.31p)
Colson (P)	2.94m (0.775m)	2.78m (2.05m)	4.1p (2.7p)	- (-)
Crabtree Trust (P)	42.4m (44.85m)	7.02m (6.48m)	19.3p (18.1p)	7.5p (7.0p)
Lawrence (P)	8.5m (8.8m)	1.28m (0.985m)	13.4p (11.2p)	1.5p (1.65p)
John Shaw & Sons (P)	0.843m (0.946m)	0.240m (0.325m)	35p (23.3p)	- (-)
The Holdings (P)	27.8m (28.6m)	2.75m (18.24m)	0.53p (0.73p) nil	- (-)
Western Refineries (P)	- (-)	0.244m (0.265m)	0.01p (0.03p)	- (-)
Whitaker (P)	- (-)	2.3m (0.764m)	5.57p (0.82p)	0.0p

(P) = Profit (L) = Loss (F) = Financial (S) = Share (D) = Dividend (EPS) = Earnings Per Share (Pre-tax) = Pre-tax Profit (Dividend) = Dividend Per Share (EPS) = Earnings Per Share (Pre-tax) = Pre-tax Profit (Dividend) = Dividend Per Share

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From little things: techno artist creates ultimate jigsaw



Techno-art: Photomosaics – such as *Flamingo* (above), *Jeune Homme Nu* (below) based on Hippolyte Flan-
drin's *Young Man by the Sea* and
commissioned portraits of Al Gore,
United States Vice-President, and
Bill Gates, president of computer

giant Microsoft – are created by
Robert Silver, president and chief
executive officer of Runway Tech-
nology in Cambridge, Massachu-
setts. Silver, 28, developed a
software program which arranges
thousands of tiny photographs to

make a different single image visi-
ble from a distance, as the details
from *Flamingo* and the bather on
this page show. A number of Sil-
ver's shifting-focus, densely detailed
works have been made into posters
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TIME OFF

TRAVEL, LEISURE & SPORT

Saturday 13 December 1997



Maldivian sunset! Few of these islands are more than 2.5 metres above sea level – in 1987 and 1991 storm surges inundated the international airport and a third of the capital, Male

Photograph: Adam Woolfitt/Robert Harding Picture Library

If paradise were half as nice ...

The aquatic beauty of the Maldives has managed to tame the most savage beasts, from sharks to troupes of Italian tourists. But how do local people cope in this idyllic world? Cleo Paskal finds out.

The first thing I saw after putting on my mask and snorkel and diving into the warm, calm, postcard-blue waters was a shark: an enormous one, less than 10 metres away, and swimming towards me.

The grey tinge of underwater light, the bland colourings of the shark and the oval frame of my mask made it all seem like a scene from an old black-and-white nature film, the sort with lots of teeth and pieces of ripped flesh. The pounding of my heart supplied the quickening da-DA, da-DA, da-DA-da-DA-da-DA-da-DA soundtrack.

I was out of the water and collapsed in a fainting heap before I'd a chance to get fully wet. Fiiza, a Maldivian friend, looked up lazily from her hammock, strung under a tree at the edge of the beach. "Forget something?"

I should have said: "yes, my sanity", or, "my place in the food chain". Instead, I just blabbered: "Sh-sh-shark".

She looked faintly curious but not particularly concerned. It was only later that I learned that the unofficial tag line of the country is: "the Maldives, where even the sharks are friendly".

The country is made up of a string of atolls in the Indian Ocean, off the west coast of India. An atoll is one of the most stunning geological formations on the planet, created when an extinct volcano collapses in on itself, creating a white sand and green palm necklace of low-lying islands around

a turquoise central lagoon. The whole is protected from big waves by an encircling coral reef.

What that means for swimmers is clear, shallow (therefore warm) waters with easy, protected access to spectacular reefs rife with a dense rainbow of tropical fish. And yes, the sharks are friendly. The Maldives have some of the best snorkelling and diving in the world. Even better, the entire experience is relatively guilt-free. The Mal-

divian government, under the guidance of the award-winning environmentalist and president of the nation, His Excellency Mr Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, keeps a tight control over the environmental and social impact of tourism.

The main way this miracle has been accomplished is by restricting tourists to resort islands. These have to comply with strict environmental controls, which can include asking visitors to take dead batteries home with them.

For the Maldives, environmental survival is a matter of immediate survival. Few of its islands are more than 2.5 metres above sea level. Any rise in sea level would sink the country. This isn't doom and gloom science fiction. Storm surges in 1987 and 1991 washed over a central atoll, at one point inundating the international airport and one-third of the capital, Male.

Since then, a massive breakwater has been built around Male. Not only has the breakwater protected the capital from untoward surges, it has also created a rather different sort of place to swim from the brochure perfection of the less developed islands.

When my pal Fiiza sensed my glib, irrational reluctance to get back into the shark- and tourist-infested waters at the resort, she brought me to where the Maldivians go for a dip.

Most of the 200 or so islands of the Maldives are off limits to tourists without special government dispensation. But, as of 1995, one quarter of the country's population of 244,640 live on the highly accessible Male. Roughly, the northern part of the island, where the jetties are, is for tourists. The farther south you go, the more "local" it becomes. The south coast of the island is about as untouristy as the Maldives get. There's a wide, paved road, bordered by a concrete pavement that drops abruptly down to the sea. About 25 metres out is the towering sea wall.

No soft sand beaches, no private coves, no glittering tropical fish. But there are, especially when school and work finish, hordes of bobbing, diving and happily squealing Maldivians.

The water between the breakwater and the pavement wall is calm and shallow, more like a municipal swimming pool than the ocean. And that's the attraction: many Maldivians,

especially the women, can't swim.

The Maldives is an Islamic country. Bikinis and booze are allowed on the resort islands, but "inhabited" islands, including the capital, insist on a bit more decorum. Women swimmers must wear at least T-shirts and knee-length shorts. Some women go into the water wearing long pants and burkas. That alone would make learning harder, but, also, you can't have male swimming instructors teaching (and possibly touching) female students.

Schools are now starting to teach young girls to swim, but the older ones, including 21-year-old Fiiza, have missed the boat. So my trip to swim by the breakwater turned into an impromptu swimming lesson. Fiiza brought along her two sisters-in-law and the daughter and niece of a colleague.

As the six of us descended the concrete steps, the women were tentative but excited. Once we were all submerged in the chest high water, we stood in a row, holding hands for stability. We ranged in age from 15 to 40, but within minutes we were giggling and splashing like children.

They took turns learning to float, and looking through my mask. Other swimmers, amused at the sight of a tourist escaped from a resort, waved and smiled. Teenagers flipped over each other's shoulders and dived for rocks. Jokesters dived underwater and pinched their friends' ankles. Boys raced each other from the wall to the breakwater. It had been years since I'd been surrounded and swept away by the sheer exuberance of playing in the water.

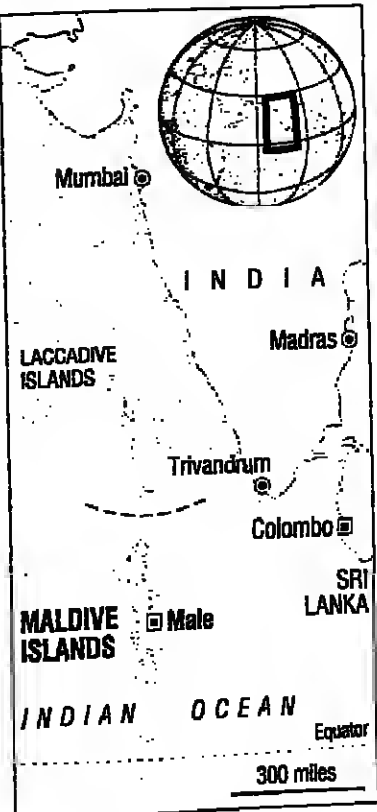
There were no picture-perfect angel fish or gracefully arcing dolphins, but I learned a new technique for flipping over somebody's shoulder. And there wasn't a shark in sight.

MAKING FOR THE MALDIVES

Most visitors travel to the Maldives on an inclusive package holiday, with operators such as Kuoni (brochure line 07000 458664), Hayes & Jarvis (0181-222 7811) and Airtours (0541 500479). Independent travel is possible, but tricky. Cleo Paskal bought a scheduled Indian Airlines flight from Trivandrum in India to the capital, Male, for around £100 return. There are numerous scheduled flights between the Sri Lankan capital, Colombo, and Male.

Accommodation
If you have no pre-booked accommodation, immigration officials may require you to book some upon arrival at the airport before they will formally allow you into the country. The least expensive options at the airport are likely to be in Male.

More information
Maldives Today magazine is available free by calling 0181-502 9747. The Ministry of Tourism is at Boduthakurufaanu Magu, Male, Republic of Maldives (00 960 323224, or www.visitmaldives.com).



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Pizza and piste

This year the popularity of Italy may have fallen a little, but the advantage is that resorts are trying all the harder to please, writes Cathy Packer.

To compare skiing in Italy with other parts of Europe, you only have to look at a multinational group of skiers coming down a mountain. The Austrians will descend in a series of perfect turns, skiing French-style tends to be more ragged, but still elegant: the Italians are all over the place, shouting and having lots of fun.

Fun is a good incentive for choosing to ski in Italy, as is the prospect of good food and wine: but it is the weakness of the line against the pound that accounts for Italy's share of the British ski market. Now, however, other parts of the world have at least as much economic appeal, and Italy is having to try harder.

The Italian ski country straggles in a long ribbon along the borders with France, Switzerland and Austria, and

ation for the first time in Bormio and the duty-free resort of Livigno, as well as the smaller resort of Mademso.

Despite offering a smaller range than some companies, Equity Total Ski does offer small places such as Andalo, only an hour from Verona airport. Equity offers all-in prices for flights, accommodation, ski school, lift passes, hire of equipment and insurance - and anyone taking their own equipment, or deciding against ski school, is offered a reduction.

What you do have to pay with Equity is a supplement for a single room. A company worth considering if you are going alone is Solo's. It offers a limited range of resorts on fixed dates - you are guaranteed to be part of a group of people, though with your own room and no obligation to take part in group activities - but Italy features only in the brochure aimed at the 50-plus age group.

For younger people, Escapades, which is part of Airtours, has a separate brochure - the Wild and Wicked Winter 97/98 Guide - aimed at "high-on-life fun-seekers" who don't want to get stuck "playing Scrabble with Auntie Doreen". Escapades features a much smaller selection of the hotels in the main Airtours brochure, and at the same prices. This could be a warning to anyone who would prefer not to be in a hotel full of "good-time animals": make sure you look at both brochures.

Italy may not be the first choice for a family holiday, although Courmayeur is recommended by several operators. One of these is Airtours, although curiously their offer of free child places covers only Sauze d'Oulx, Bardonecchia, Santa Caterina and Passo Tonale.

Courmayeur, the oldest of the Italian alpine resorts, developed into an international ski resort when the opening of the Mont Blanc tunnel linked it with Chamonix. It has nearly 70 miles of pistes, down the slopes of Mont Blanc as well as in the main skiing area, the Chevcroix. This year brings a new quad lift to take skiers up the Chevcroix. There are opportunities for glacier and cross-country skiing, but Courmayeur is probably best known for guided off-piste skiing.

Of course, by now you may already have this season's skiing sorted out, but a bit of advance planning could save you money next year. Panorama has already published a preview edition of its holidays in Italy for 1998/99; book before the end of June for January 1999 and you could get a six-day lift pass for free.

Airtours 01706 232323; Crystal 0181-399 5144; Equity Total Ski 01273 298293; Escapades 0541 304001; First Choice Ski 0990 557755; Innerski 01623 456333; Neilson 0990 994444; Panorama 01273 206531; Solo's 0181-951 2811; Thomson 0990 329329

SKI TIP

To ski faster and accelerate, focus on making a pole plant as you straighten your legs at the start of a turn. To decelerate, plant your pole as you bend your legs at the end of the turn.

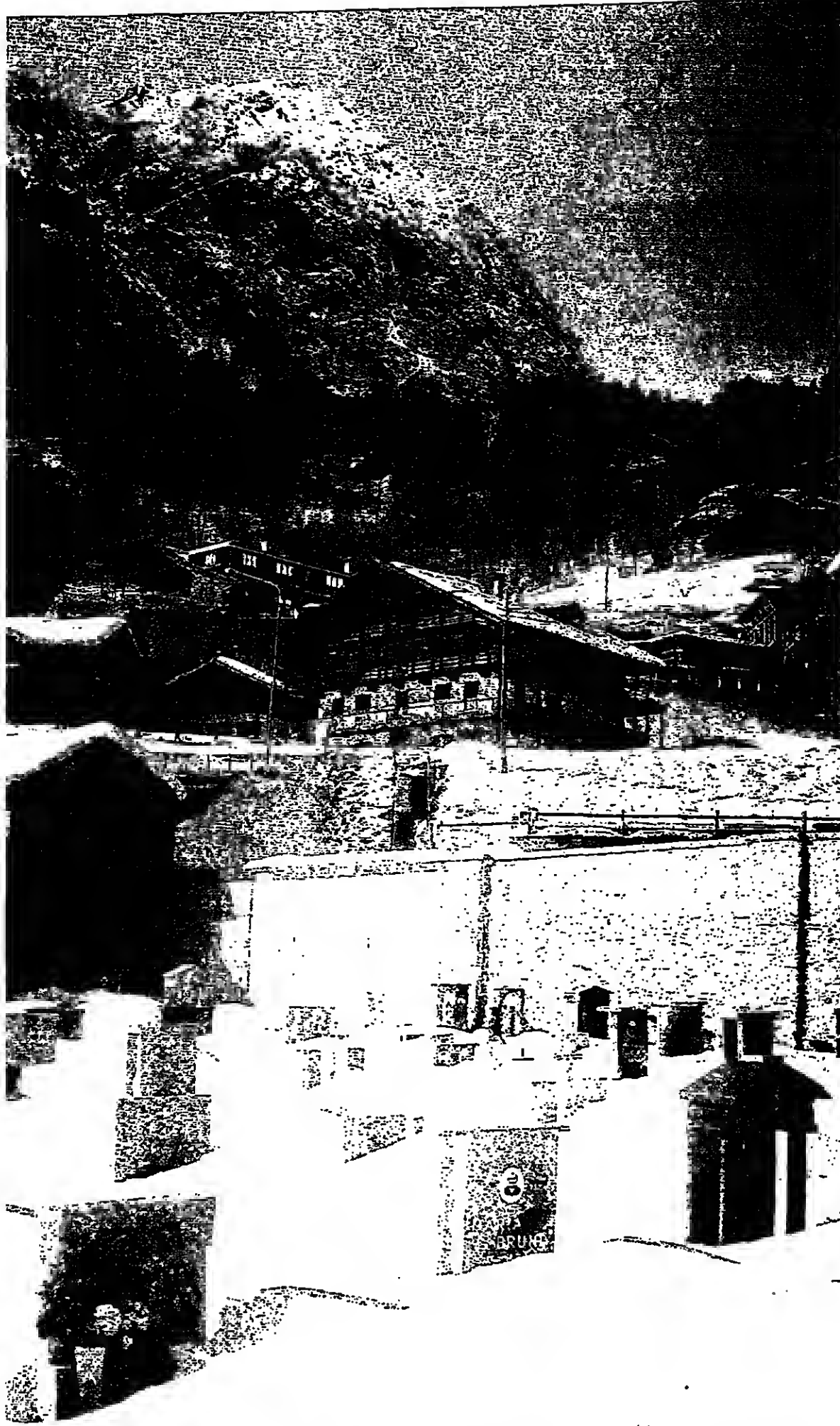
Chris Exall

provides some of the most varied skiing in Europe. In the Alps are the Val d'Aosta and the Via Lattea, or Milky Way, a vast area whose main resort is Sauze d'Oulx, but which spreads to the French resort of Montgenèvre. Farther east are the Dolomites and the round-mountain run of the Sella Ronda, whose ritziest resort is Cortina d'Ampezzo.

Most of the Italian resorts are reached from Turin, Bergamo, Verona and Venice. The transfer times from airport to resort are worth taking into account if you are thinking of booking a holiday which uses Bergamo; if travelling on to Livigno you have five-and-a-half hours' more travelling time ahead.

The best choice is to be found at First Choice Ski, with 20 resorts, and Crystal, which as well as 16 other destinations offers holidays in Alagna, an hour or so from the Mont Blanc tunnel, and in the villages of Arabba and Corvara in the Sella Ronda.

Most operators are extending their number of resorts. Both Thomson and Airtours are offering Sestriere. Another new Thomson destination is nearby Bardonecchia; Neilson has accomod-



Italian advantage: Alagna is within easy reach of the Mont Blanc tunnel

Photograph: Jess Stock



SIMON CALDER

If you are reading this on the 8.20 from Waterloo to Bourg St Maurice, stop smirking. Not only are you on the first commercial train direct from London to the French Alps - you are also avoiding the utter chaos at Heathrow, following yesterday's fire at Terminal One. Disruption caused by the blaze is likely to continue for the rest of the weekend, and indeed the year; thousands of travellers will find themselves delayed at Heathrow.

Were it Los Angeles airport, this would not necessarily be a dreadful prospect. *Independent* readers have responded magnificently to the question posed by Kit Norman, who finds himself marooned there for several hours between flights on Christmas Day. What, he wondered, should he do to fill the time (besides, perhaps, enjoying a flame-grilled meal at Burger King)?

Felicity Pocock of Oxford suggests a \$20 taxi ride to Venice Beach: "Extraordinarily varied architecture, nice clear air in December, and even on Christmas Day there will be somewhere to eat on Washington Boulevard."

You need not go so far for somewhere to eat. David Rush and Angela James of Surrey recommend you look out at the airport for "a white, futuristic-looking building, a kind of tower with a big dome covering it, with four large supporting legs which sweep down to the ground. It tended to get used a lot as a backdrop to Hollywood movies in the Sixties. We had always assumed it to be a hi-tech radar premises housing some sophisticated monitoring equipment, but it is open to the public, and goes by the strange title of The Theme Restaurant."

"By ascending the central lifts one arrives at the top to a restaurant and piano bar. The prices for food and drink are reasonable, the views are dramatic and the service is congenial; certainly an improvement on the LAX transit lounges."

Ray Heyworth of Edinburgh says his family actually profited from the stopover: "My children occupied time checking telephone coin boxes for unclaimed change, then spending the proceeds. This pastime, of course, is not limited to Los Angeles airports or, even, children."

It seems ungrateful to say so, but besides some jolly letters from readers, every day the post brings a Santa-sized sack of publicity material (the travel industry not yet having acknowledged the existence of e-mail; travel@independent.co.uk comes straight to me, for anyone who cares).

Most material goes straight into the recycling bin. Occasionally a press release so wonderfully mad appears that it makes all the letter-opening worthwhile.

The late entrant for deal of the year, if not the decade, comes from Emirates. The Dubai-based airline wants to promote the inflight phones that are fitted to every seat of its Boeing 777s. So during December the airline is allowing passengers to call for as long as they like for a flat fee of US\$20 (about £12).

This gives an opportunity to save a fortune. Take a typical Emirates itinerary of London-Dubai-Hong Kong (from discount agents for about £500 return). Talkative travellers can call their aunts in Australia from 30,000 rather than at home through BT; you could get a call worth £200 for a fraction of the regular price. And that's just on the first leg of your flight. Use the same deal flying Dubai-London to call a friend in the Falklands, and avoid a bill of about £570. You've more than covered the cost of your flight - and that's before the return leg. I just feel sorry for the person sitting next to you.

GREEN CHANNEL

One would think that sliding down a mountain on a couple of slats of wood was one of the least environmentally damaging things a fun-loving tourist could do. Unfortunately, when there are thousands of us doing it all at the same time our need for chalets, roads, ski-lifts, water and fuel puts a heavy burden on the environment and on the local villages. We even

often need snow made for us by gas-guzzling snow cannons.

The Alps, known as "the roof garden of Europe" with 5 million tourist beds, 12,000 ski lifts, 50 million tourists and 150 million short-term visitors has long experienced the downside of catering to this increasingly popular downhill leisure pursuit. But now locals in the Lech valley in Austria, where visitors

outnumber locals by 7:1 in peak season, are reclaiming their valley. Community politicians decided to restrict access to the valley in order to preserve the quality of life for locals and visitors - so when their limit of 17,000 ski tickets has been reached, the entrance doors to the valley are closed.

The goal of their lofty named Ecologically Oriented Life and

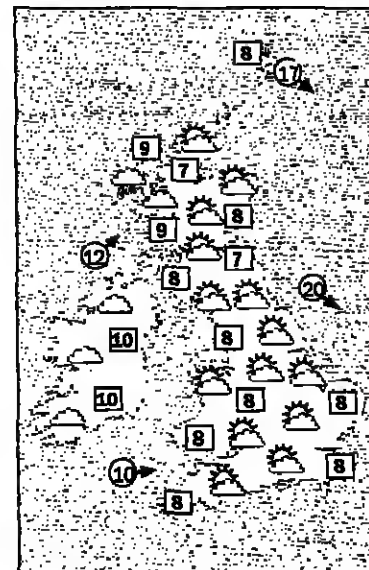
Economy in Lech project is to marry a good time for the tourists with a healthy environment, a strong economy and an uncompromised local community. They are starting with solving problems such as traffic congestion and pollution and in the longer term will focus on encouraging more efficient use of water, energy and other resources. Austria also has a "Green Village"

ecolabelling programme in which 36 villages have agreed to abide by ecological criteria. The Tyrol, for instance, has a Tyrolean Environmental Seal of Quality - an ecolabelling programme for accommodation and catering businesses. "Ecology and economy are not antagonists, but partners," says the Tyrolean tourism board.

Sue Wheat

WEATHER

The British Isles, noon today



Yesterday's midday (gmt), cloudy, clear, fog, heavy, mist, rain, snow, sunny, thunder

Aberdeen	6.43	Cardiff	11.52	Liverpool	6.41	Oxford	11.52
Aberystwyth	8.42	Cork	10.50	Leeds	12.54	Plymouth	12.54
Belfast	8.43	Exeter	10.48	London	12.54	Sheffield	10.50
Birmingham	7.45	Gloucester	11.55	Manchester	11.52	Strasbourg	11.52
Bristol	12.54	Harrogate	8.46	Newcastle	11.52	Swansea	12.54
Cardiff	10.59	Leeds	6.48	Sheffield	11.52	Wolverhampton	11.52
Exeter	12.54	London	12.54	St Andrews	5.41		
Gloucester	12.54	Manchester	11.52	York	6.43		
Harrogate	8.46	Newcastle	11.52				
Leeds	6.48	Sheffield	11.52				
London	12.54	St Andrews	5.41				
Manchester	11.52	York	6.43				
Newcastle	11.52						

Lighting-up times

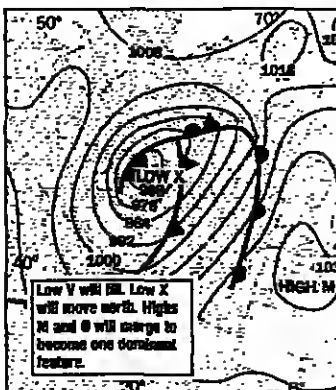
Belfast	15.50	to	08.39	Nottingham	15.48	to	08.12
Birmingham	15.53	to	08.11	Sheffield	15.53	to	08.12
Bristol	16.01	to	08.08	Strasbourg	16.02	to	08.09
Cardiff	15.43	to	08.41	Swansea	15.43	to	08.41
Exeter	15.52	to	07.59	Wolverhampton	15.52	to	08.00
Gloucester	15.49	to	08.13	Manchester	15.49	to	08.19
Harrogate	15.38	to	08.24	Newcastle	15.38	to	08.25

General summary and outlook

Eastern Scotland will be mostly dry with some good sunny breaks, but the west will be cloudy with a little rain at times. Northern Ireland will be mostly cloudy with only a little early sunshine and an increasing risk of light rain by the afternoon. Temperatures will be near or a little above the normal. Meanwhile, England and Wales will have a bright, fresh day with patchy cloud and sunshine at times. It will feel rather cold with frost setting in after dark.

The coming week will be rather cold across most parts of the UK. It will stay mainly dry and bright with some sunshine, but it will become increasingly cold with sharp night frosts and the risk of mist and fog patches. Southern and eastern parts of England will have a noticeable wind-chill early next week with a growing risk of light showers breaking out which will fall as snow in places with possible light accumulations.

Atlantic chart, noon today



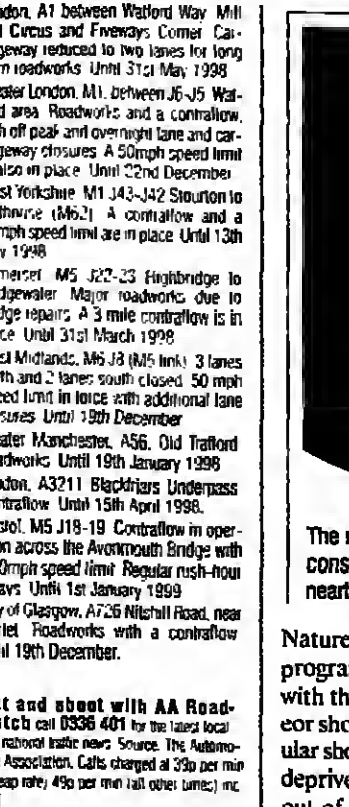
World weather most recent available figures at noon local time

Athens	13.55	Frankfurt	11.52	New York	1.34
Bombay	20.55	Geneva	11.52	Nice	11.52
Buenos Aires	20.55	London	11.52	Paris	11.52
Calcutta	20.55	Madrid	11.52	Rome	11.52
Cairo	20.55	Moscow	11.52	Stockholm	11.52
Canton	20.55	Osaka	11.52	Tokyo	11.52
Cebu	20.55	Seoul	11.52	Yokohama	11.52
Colon	20.55	Singapore	11.52		
Hankow	20.55	Taipei	11.52		
Hong Kong	20.55	Tientsin	11.52		
Kobe	20.55	Wuhan	11.52		
London	20.55	Xinjiang	11.52		
Lyons	20.55				
Manila	20.55				
Medan	20.55				
Perth	20.55				
Rangoon	20.55				
Shanghai	20.55				
Singapore	20.55				
Sourabaya	20.55				
Tientsin	20.55				
Yokohama	20.55				

AA Roadwatch

London, A1 between Watford Way Mill Hill Circus and Friar-chase, Great Cambridge Roadworks until 31st May 1998. Greater London M1, between J6-J5, Watford area. Roadworks and a contraflow with off peak and overnight lane and contraflow closures. A 50mph speed limit is also in place. Until 22nd December. West Yorkshire M1 J43-J42 Station to Lethbridge (M62). A contraflow and a 50mph speed limit are in place. Until 13th July 1998. Somerset A5, 22-23, Highbridge to Bridgewater. Major roadworks. Due to bridge repairs. A 3 mile contraflow is in place. Until 31st March 1998. West Midlands M6 J9 (M5 link) 3 lanes north and 2 lanes south closed. 50 mph speed limit in force with additional lane closures. Until 13th December. Greater Manchester A56, Old Trafford Roadworks. Until 19th January 1999. London, A3211 Blackheath Underpass. Contraflow. Until 15th April 1998. Bristol, M5 J18-19. Contraflow in operation across the Avonmouth Bridge with a 50mph speed limit. Regular rush-hour delays. Until 1st January 1999. City of Glasgow, A725 Whitehall Road, near Hurler. Roadworks with a contraflow. Until 19th December.

The sky at night



The radiant point of tonight's meteor shower is located in the constellation Gemini. This chart shows the position of Gemini and nearby constellations over the south-eastern horizon at 11pm.

Nature's fireworks are due to be on the celestial entertainment programme again tonight, as Earth makes its annual encounter with the stream of space dust responsible for the Geminid meteor shower. This routinely one of the most prolific of all the regular showers, but this year the interference of the almost full Moon deprives observers of the dark skies needed for getting the most out of the display. Nevertheless, if skies are clear, the fleeting streaks of some bright meteors should still be visible, traceable to the radiant of the shower just to the west of Castor. A favourable aspect of this shower is that Gemini is well up for most of the night. In 1983 astronomers discovered an asteroid, named Phaethon, which follows the same orbit in space as the meteoroids that give us the Geminid shower. It is presumed to be the defunct remains of a comet which has left the meteoroids in its wake. Jacqueline Mitton



SIMON CALDER



48 hours in the life of Bruges

For a short cut to the soul of the city, Martin Scudamore offers a guide.

Why go now?

One of Bruges' great charms is its network of canals, but they can be smelly. Visit in winter and minimise the offence. Also, a trip by car in December offers a wonderful chance to stock up with Christmas spirit and wine on the way back to the ferry. The exchange rate is favourable at the moment (59 Belgian francs to the pound). And, although Bruges isn't huge, you almost certainly will be by the time you return – it's a foodies' paradise.

Beam down

We took the car Dover to Calais (from where Bruges is an easy hour's drive) benefiting from an extremely cheap deal through AA Motoring Holidays, which continues until 31 March. We paid £99 for a family of four, ferry plus three nights bed and breakfast, (children sharing parents' room), at the three-star Novotel, two miles south of the town. It's a perfectly acceptable, though unexciting, base. You need to be an

AA member to book (although you can take non-members with you), and there's a £10 surcharge for Friday and Saturday sailings.

If you're not driving, there's a jetfoil from Ramsgate to Ostend (100 minutes on Holyman Sally Line (0990 595522) then a 15-minute train journey to Bruges. Or, from tomorrow, travel by Eurostar (0345 303030) on the new high-speed link to Brussels, and take the train back to Bruges (50 mins). That should cost around £79 return.

Get your bearings

The beauty of Bruges is concentrated by the compactness of its centre: the whole area is easily navigated on foot. Picture the city as two concentric teardrops: the larger one (3km by 2km) bounded by the main canal and ring roads, enclosing the smaller one, (2km by 1km), with Grote Markt as its focus, and in which virtually all the sights are to be found. The skyline is a joyful riot of church towers and staggered, gabled roofs, with almost every building redolent of centuries of Hanseatic history, although many are deceptively recent. Be careful with the language: the country is ostensibly bilingual, but in this northern Flemish-

speaking area some may take offence if you make the effort to try French. Better to stick to English, spoken well everywhere.

Check in

For a four-star hotel in the centre, try the Prinsehof in Ontvangensstraat, double room rate from about £60 to £110 (00 32 50 34 26 90); or the more modest but equally central one-star 't Koffieboonje (from £30) in Hallestraat (00 32 50 33 80 27). Weekends up to Christmas are already heavily booked; to check availability call the tourism office in Bruges, where they keep track of vacancies (00 32 50 44 86 86) or on the Internet: <http://www.brugge.be>. In winter the office is open 9.30am to 5pm weekdays; at weekends and public holidays 9.30am to 1pm and from 2pm until 5.30pm.

Take a ride

The relative lack of cars in Bruges' centre allows full rein for the traditional sightseeing horse-drawn cab. What's more, in this town of medieval-looking buildings, the old-fashioned rigs don't seem out of place. Half an hour around the sights for four or five people costs £15, with rugs provided for cold

hands and knees. A stop part way for the horse to rest and feed gives the opportunity to visit the Béguinage ouinary, founded in 1245; but be careful not to get locked in, as our party did – the nuns appear to belong to a silent order and cannot easily direct you out again.

Your first sight of the canal pleasure boats might suggest the other kind of trap – the tourist trap – but it would be a shame to miss the wonderful views of the city that can be enjoyed from the water. A trip takes about half-an-hour, complete with commentary. There are various points of embarkation around the centre: the cost is £3 per adult, £1.50 for children.

Take a hike

Make it a climb. The celebrated belfry tower in the Markt appears to have a slight lean, although this could be the effect of the Belgian beer. The winding 366-step staircase is a challenge, as there's barely room for people ascending to squeeze past those coming back down. Half-way up is a small museum in what was the medieval treasure room; two-thirds of the way is the mechanism for the magnificent 47 bells that play concerts three times a week, including Saturdays and Sundays in winter between 2.15 and 3pm. The belfry is open daily, 9.30am-12.30pm and 1.30-5pm, entry about £1.60.

... or a bike

Cyclists in Bruges benefit from being allowed to pedal in both directions down 50 normally one-way streets. If you can't bring your own machine, cycles can be hired for as little as £2.50 a day, from de Ketting, Gentpoortstraat 23 (050 34 41 96), or various other places including the station, at rates up to £5 per day.

Lunch on the run

On Saturdays on 't Zand and on Wednesdays on Grote Markt, a gigantic market spreads out, selling mainly food, including the most enormous barbecued meat stall, with chickens and joints of lamb revolving on spits in a state ballet.

Cultural afternoon

For a treasure, don't miss Michelangelo's marble *Madonna and Child* in the Church of Our Lady in Mariestraat, avoiding Saturday services at 4pm and 5.30pm.

Unfortunately, the outstanding Memling Museum, occupying the building which was the Hospital of St John in the Middle Ages, is closed for renovation until August 1998. Console yourself with a visit to the Groeninge Museum, with its fine collections of paintings, especially of Flemish Primitives, open in winter 9.30am-12.30pm and 2pm-5pm (not Tuesdays).

Window shopping

The area around Grote Markt boasts the best shops. One at the south-east corner is full of ultra-modern gadgets and designer items, such as a rubber vase which looked so much like porcelain that I just had to pretend to hand it to someone and then drop it at their feet.

Bruges opticians clearly feel a special need to flex their creative muscles; most displays seem to favour naked men (photos, sculptures) and one sports a particularly splendid display of phalluses in all possible shapes, sizes and shades, complete with amusing titles. For those who are easily embarrassed (why do previously glazed-over children suddenly become interested, and start asking questions?), the arrays of local lace in the dozens of shops devoted to this ancient craft are much less controversial.

An aperitif

We went on a tour of the Straffe Hendrik brewery in Walpein, which was already a going concern in 1546. It costs £2, free glass of beer included. The brewing process itself is disappointing – the entire operation occupies one small room; the rest of the tour is devoted to the history of the brewery, but includes a clamber up to the roof to survey Bruges' terracotta rooftops. Tours are at 11am and 3pm all winter.

De mer dinner

The local speciality is seafood. Mussels are available by the bucket-load in every restaurant, and there are many other good fish dishes, some of which we enjoyed at 't Ketelje, Oude Burg 20, just off Simon Stevinplein. At 't Mozarthuis in Huidenvettersplein, right behind the fish market (mornings, Tuesday to Saturday), you dine by candlelight, with classical music in the background – but this has to compete with the billowing smoke and sizzling sounds from amateur chefs who have ordered the

mixed grill, which you cook yourself on a hot stone at your table. The real chef's steaks are excellent too.

Sunday morning: go to church

Bruges has many churches, but two of the most impressive are close neighbours in the centre, their spires punctuating the horizon from all directions. The 13th-15th century Church of Our Lady rises in glorious brickwork to 122m, while St Saviour's Cathedral, barely 300m to the north, is Bruges' oldest parish church (12th-15th century) and contains some fine features. No sightseeing during services, which are at 11am at Our Lady, 10am and 6pm at St Saviour's.

Bracing brunch

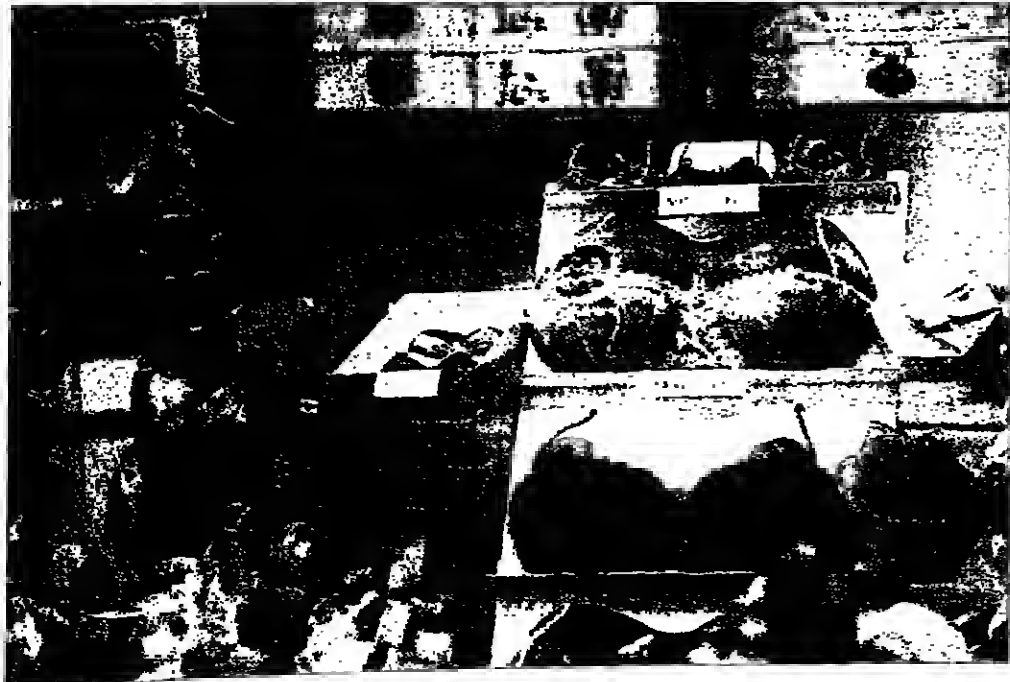
The Cranenburg café is just one of many lining the northern edge of Grote Markt, where you can buy breakfast, snacks and sandwiches, and enjoy the view. Typical fare includes: beer (85p), coffee (£1), croissants (85p), ham and cheese baguette (£3), bacon and eggs (£3.50), apple cake (£1.65). Is that belt getting a little tight?

A walk in the park

If you have brought the car, the best place to leave it for free is at the southern edge of the town, off the ring road. That way you'll walk through the Minnewater park to reach the central attractions, and you'll already be familiar with the charming Lake of Love. This body of water is at a different level from the rest of the canals, so doesn't form part of the boat tour. Even if it's not market day, make a point of visiting 't Zand, the square at the western edge of the central area, not just to choose from among its wall-to-wall restaurants, but to enjoy the superb modern fountain, which is even more impressive when illuminated at night.

The icing on the cake

This has to be the justly famed Belgian chocolate, available from numerous outlets even on Sunday, when many other shops are closed. Stock up on those delightful, and very reasonably priced, two-toe chocolate 'fruits de mer', or make a custom selection from the many hand-made varieties available. Just keep off the scales for a while after your return.



Bird's eye Bruges: the view of Grote Markt from the 366-step belfry, top; window shopping and Belgian tastes, right

Photographs: Brian Harris/B&S Photography

RED CHANNEL

Trouble spots around the world: this week, the Victoria Falls

"Victoria Falls is a truly spectacular sight, and has been a source of income for Zimbabwe and Zambia from the thousands of tourists who visit it each year. Unfortunately, yet another natural wonder has been corrupt-

ed by the greed of a developing nation – to the extent that many travellers can no longer afford to see it. "A year ago, entrance to the Victoria Falls on the Zimbabwe border rose from US\$5 to a whopping \$20 as officials tried to take advantage of the influx of overseas travellers. This is in line with the great misconcep-

tion in developing countries that if you are a foreigner you must have buckets of money. The cost of the entrance to the Falls taints its beauty, and is poor value – \$20 is a press on a backpacker's budget. Instead of bringing in more money for the country, the Zimbabwean officials are turning potential tourists away from

both their country and their people. "Fortunately, on the Zambian side they have been slow to catch on to the idea of exploiting tourists. You can cross the border and view the Falls from the Zambian side for a mere US\$3. Although you don't see the postcard view of the Falls, in dry season you can swim in the Champagne

Pools directly above the Falls – a spectacular experience."

Ian, Johannesburg

From 'Travellers' Café', one of the features of *Take Off!*, the latest addition to the BBC's commercial on-line service www.bbc.co.uk. You can find it on the Internet at www.takeoff.bbc.com

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A ghost town called Motown

In tune with the Christmas Motown re-release of the classic Chartbusters albums of the Sixties, Nigel Williamson takes a tour of Hitsville USA - but finds that they're hardly dancing in the streets in Detroit today.

If the average American were lying on the couch and the shrink said "Detroit", the men in the white coats would be swiftly summoned if "cars" were not the instant response. The next thing to come to mind would almost certainly be Tamla Motown, and the patient's right foot would be tapping out that four-four beat before he or she could even get the words out.

Detroit is the Motor City but it's other name used to be Hitsville USA, musical home to Diana Ross and the Supremes, Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye, the Temptations, Smokey Robinson and the Miracles, Gladys Knight and the Pips, the Jackson Five and countless others who ensured that the his just kept on coming.

Yet how swiftly the icons of our youth fade and die. We walked into the arrivals hall at Detroit's Wayne County airport to find that instead of "Dancing in the Street" they were playing the latest Spice Girls single. Then, when we collected our hire car from Alamo, instead of a Cadillac we were offered a Nissan streamliner metal box.

You wonder why modern Detroit exists. Downtown is neutro-bomb dead, eerily deserted in the evening and like a ghost town at weekends. Sitting in a bar later in Birmingham, one of the anonymous but surprisingly leafy outlying suburbs that have replaced the once throbbing heart of the city, Mark Laval, a large and amiable type who would not be out of place in *Cheers*, heard our English accents and asked: "What in hell brought you here?" He was incredulous that anyone would want to visit the city where he has worked as a car dealer for the past 20 years. "They've tried everything here and nothing works," he said mournfully.

Even the locals say Detroit is a city that has lost its soul. There are abandoned, decaying buildings everywhere, yet the dank shells have more character than the attempts that have been made at redevelopment. On the river front looking across to Ontario (by a geographical quirk, Detroit faces south into Canada), the vast Renaissance Center, with its four circular towers of reflective glass, is spectacular from the outside, yet inside the shops and restaurants are sad and desolate. One former mayor complained that after 6pm you could fire a cannon down

the main boulevard of Woodward Avenue and no one would even notice.

Detroit still manufactures motors - one third of those produced in the US - but the romance has gone. The great names of Pontiac, Lincoln, Plymouth and Cadillac live on (and are all preserved for posterity on the map of Detroit and its environs) but the new models with their smooth, aerodynamic designs all look indistinguishable from my Japanese-styled metal box.

There is still music being made in Detroit, too, but the city no longer provides the beat for the nation. Motown moved its operations to Los Angeles in 1972 and the music was never the same again. Nor was the city, which in the Thirties and Forties was alive with jazz and blues, full of after-hours drinking and dancing establishments - known for some obscure reason as "blind pigs" - and inter-racial clubs, called "black and tans". It was that spirit which Berry Gordy Jr tapped when, almost 40 years ago, he started a record label that was to change the face of modern music.

Today the plain, weatherboarded house at 2648 West Grand Boulevard would look as anonymous as any other middle-America post-war consumerist home, were it not for the "Hitsville USA" sign on the front lawn. Gordy moved here in 1959, confining his family to the first-floor apartment so that he could realise his dream by building a recording studio downstairs.

And what dreams were manufactured in that tiny studio. I had assumed that Gordy had merely cut his first records here, and that when the Supremes made the big time in 1964, the label had moved into more spacious premises. But no, every single great Motown record you can think of was cut in this one room in this nondescript house until the move to the West Coast - from the Four Tops' thrilling "Reach Out (TII Be

There)" to Stevie Wonder's thundering anthem "Uptight", from the Temptations' funky "Get Ready" to the Jackson Five's storming debut "I Want You Back".

The studio was open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, such was the prolific output. The original recording schedule from a day in November 1966, still preserved on the wall, conveys the magic: "3.00 Supremes, 5.00 Temptations".

All of the original recording equipment is still here, more rudimentary than what many a modern teenager has in his bedroom. Yet for any music lover the thrill is indescribable. Three microphones descend from the ceiling and the thought of Diana, Mary and Florence standing there way back in 1964 singing those breathy "ooh-ooh-oohs" is irresistible. During our visit, three elderly black women on vacation from New York were equally taken with the image, and stood there harmonising their very own Supremes tribute. You can sit at the piano played by Stevie Wonder, and close your eyes to hear the late Marvin Gaye hitting those high notes on "I Heard it Thru the Grapevine". If you don't believe in ghosts, this is the sort of room that just might change your mind. Forget GraceLand: this is quite simply the most important musical shrine in America.

In the control room, which is the size of a broom cupboard, there is a hole in the floor by the mixing desk, where Berry Gordy sat for 13 years tapping his foot until he had worn right through both the carpet and the linoleum. Upstairs, his apartment is preserved as a perfect time-capsule of Sixties black American style, with tables of strange geometrical shape, purples and greens and lava lamps. Elsewhere are the Sixties cigarette and sweet machines used by Gordy's artists between sessions. He ran a tight ship, charging the teenage Stevie Wonder and the 10-year-old Michael Jackson 10 cents for a candy bar. Another room contains gold discs, sequined costumes worn by the Supremes, and items from the stage wardrobe of Jackson, who pays his dues with a large stipend that keeps the museum going.

Elsewhere in Detroit, the Motown trail runs cold. Attempts to find the house where Diana Ross was born, at 5736 St Antoine, reveal only parking lots and wasteland. A search for Smokey Robinson's old house on Belmont Street is similarly frustrating. Yet it matters not. The soul of Detroit is preserved for ever in all its glory in the Motown Historical Museum.

The Motown Historical Museum opens daily from 10am to 5pm, admission \$6.

MAKING FOR MOTOWN

Northwest flies daily from Gatwick to Detroit, and British Airways from Heathrow. For travel in January, Bon Voyage (01703 330332) quotes £349 on Northwest, or £273 on United if you are prepared to change planes in Chicago or Washington DC. If you want to combine it with Miami, then American offers a fare including the Florida city with Detroit for around £350, through discount agents.



Hitsville USA: the Supremes take centre stage during Detroit's dancing days

Photograph: Redfern

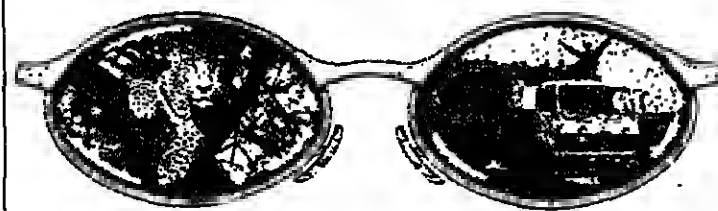
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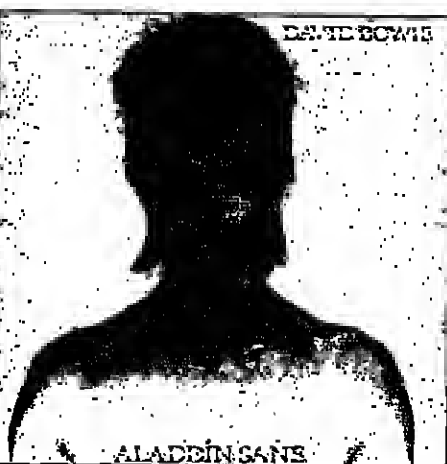
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Motown



Family album: Bowie ran Sunday night folk sessions at the Three Tuns, above, now called the Rat and Parrot, before his meteoric rise

Photograph: Andrew Buurman

The ch-ch-ch-changing face of Ziggy's Beckenham

In Memphis, say, or Liverpool, you would be in no doubt that a very famous rock star indeed hailed from those parts. Andy Bull set out on the trail of fame - in suburbia.

This is not Memphis. It is Beckenham, slap bang in the suburban drab-lands of south London, and the fact that David Bowie grew up here and, indeed, did not leave until his 1972 album *Ziggy Stardust* made him a major star, has passed the place by. It's the same story in Dartford, four A to Z pages east, where Mick Jagger and Keith Richards grew up.

Why is it, when there is very nearly a superstar for every suburb, that these places are not bristling with blue plaques, offering bus tours round the relevant sites and opening childhood homes to the public, kitted out in period G-plan with a guitar left nonchalantly on a candlewick bedspread and a lyric scrawled in a schoolbook on the kitchen table?

I put it down to indifference and embarrassment. Indifference from local burghers, and the embarrassment of rock stars - for whom image is all - about their mundane suburban roots. Bowie even used to claim he was from Brixton. But the truth is out there, in Beckenham and in Dartford, though it took a day trip to find it.

As the train rattles off through South

London you can see why these boys would disown their origins. The inner city, with its seedy shops and dubious communal houses, would have been nectar to a suburban kid.

How his heart would have sunk as the train took him out past cool and slightly scary Brixton and relentlessly on through Herne Hill with its detached villas and wide, green, open spaces. Why, Sydenham Hill station even has a nature reserve! Then it gets really ridiculous - you get places with joke names, like Penge.

Imagine the embarrassment of taking the ultra-cool, kookie American chick called Angie, whom you met in a West End club, down this line and getting out at Beckenham Junction, with its ornate Victorian ironwork. Imagine running the gauntlet of shops selling prints of the parish church. Fabulous Creatures glass animals and "superb sausages handmade on the premises", as you make for the pub where you run an arts lab and organised a free open-air festival.

But David Bowie did just that.

The pub - Bowie knew it as the Three Tuns but it is now the Rat and Parrot - was an obvious starting-point on my Rock the Suburbs tour. He used to run Sunday night folk sessions in the back room. After his first hit single, "Space Oddity", in 1969 he got more ambitious, and renamed these sessions an Arts Lab, where a strange hybrid of mime, poetry, art, Buddhist incantation, tie-dyeing classes and free-form jazz took place. Bowie even wrote a song, called "Memory of a Free Festival", about a multi-media event he organised here, which contains the toe-curling line: "I kissed a lot of people that day".

If this were America the Rat and Parrot, which stands behind a particularly heavy

camouflage of window boxes and hanging baskets, would be called Bowie's. The menu would boast Ziggy burgers and Young American fries, and a tall glass of milk would be a Thin White Drink. Mannequins would be sporting the costumes of the Spiders from Mars.

Not so in Beckenham.

The barmaid sounded slightly apologetic as she broke it to me that they had absolutely no Bowie memorabilia on the premises. "There might have been some once," she said, "but since it was taken over by Scottish and Newcastle it got themed like this." She looked around in silence at the open-plan-but-olde-worldie place, with its customers sipping cappuccinos and eating late breakfast. There was nothing more to be said.

In between his first, isolated hit single and his emergence three years later as a fully formed rock star, David Bowie lived with Angie in a cavernous flat at Haddon Hall, a Gothic Victorian villa just north of the town centre, at 42 Southend Road. Here he wrote most of the material for the albums *The Man Who Sold the World*, *Hunky Dory* and *Ziggy Stardust*. Night after night, with his guitarist Mick Ronson and the rest of his band, he honed songs such as "Moonage Daydream", "Changes", "Andy Warhol", "Queen Bitch" and "Kooks". Bowie has said that the character of Ziggy Stardust, the first of many strange and compelling personas that he created for himself, was born in Haddon Hall.

But as I reach the spot, past houses so vast and set so far back that they are almost out of sight, I discover that Haddon Hall is no more; No 42 has been replaced by a block of flats and a road called Shannon Way.

In 1970, while living at Haddon Hall, David and Angie got married at Bromley Register office. If they had married at a wedding chapel in Las Vegas, their names would still be up in lights outside. But in Bromley, I found, they won't even confirm that a marriage took place.

Haddon Hall became a commune, a court in which Bowie was the ever-fêted king. Over-indulgence in sex, drugs and anything else that was going, was the norm. Maybe this accounts for the fact that, on the day Neil Armstrong became the first man on the moon, David saw an alien spacecraft land in Southend Road. And perhaps mind-expanding substances fuelled his desire to get in touch with any aliens in the Beckenham area. One night he stood on the roof aiming a wire coathanger at the skies, until a golfer on the Beckenham Place Park course behind Haddon Hall yelled at him: "Do you get BBC2?" This, presumably, was a topical joke at the time.

Bowie's weirdness was not an act. There was madness on his mother's side of the family and his constant fear was that it would be visited upon him, as it had been on his half-brother, Terry Burns. Terry, 15 years Bowie's senior, suffered increasing-

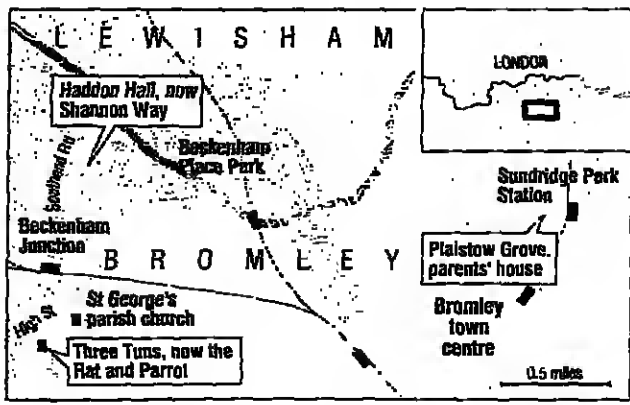
ly severe bouts of schizophrenia and was finally committed to Cane Hill Hospital in Coulsdon. He eventually killed himself by jumping under a train at the neighbouring Coulsdon South station.

Terry had a huge influence on David during his early teens, and inspired the songs "All The Madmen" on *The Man Who Sold the World*, and "The Bewlay Brothers" on *Hunky Dory*.

In the days he was close to Terry, David was living at the family home, 24 Plaistow Grove, a mile or so to the west. As I walked there I reflected that it was his streak of weirdness that lifted Bowie out of the ordinary and made him a star, someone who could constantly reinvent himself. Without the strangeness, he would probably never have risen above his suburban roots.

Plaistow Grove is a tight, square cul-de-sac of terraced cottages beside Sundridge Park Station. The house next door to Bowie's old home bears a plaque which reads: "An artist lives here". An artist lived next door, too, but there is nothing to tell you so, or hint that this was the place where a nine-year-old picked up a guitar, thrashed out a Chuck Berry song, and announced to his startled parents that he was going to be a rock star.

Today, the only music comes from a pub called the Crown. "Live Duo Karma" and Mike and Beanie are among the forthcoming attractions.

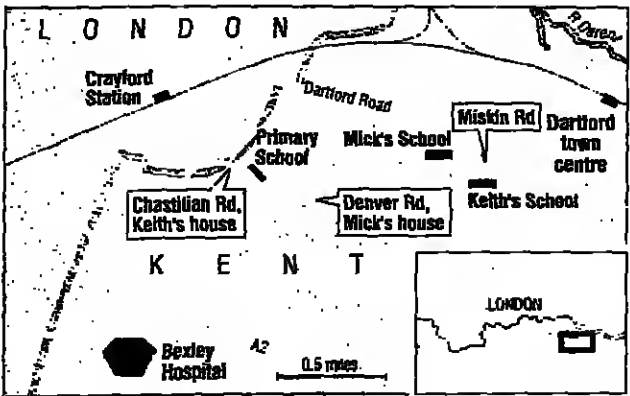


Dartford: the suburb where no Stone was left unturned

Dartford is not a pretty place, but a generation ago it offered life-changing opportunities for Mick Jagger and Keith Richards. Andy Bull revisited their old stamping-ground.

I took the train from Sundridge Park in search of Mick and Keith. Trains and stations had become inseparable to the story I was following, and Sundridge Park was a particularly nice one. It's a spotless little place, hidden in a cutting and flanked by beech trees, and exists on a little three-station line that would take me just one stop on my journey to Grove Park. I even had a period open-air gent's urinal.

I could tell I was in a time-warped from the only other passenger. It was Wednesday, and he was still reading last Sunday's *News of the World*. I changed trains and headed for Lewisham, from where I could get to Dartford. On the way I sat back with my feet up, improvising that scene from



Quadrophenia where the sound track is "Out of my Brain on the Train".

Dartford is not a pretty sight. The town centre is swamped under monoliths, including the Orchard Theatre, a multi-storey car park and a string of warehouse shops. To the east the Glass Wellcome headquarters manages to look exactly like an architectural model of a new building, rather than the real thing: all immaculate grass, gushing fountains and neat little figures striding purposefully.

The station is a mess. The indicator boards don't work, and nor do the staff.

It is, nevertheless, historic.

Because it was here, in 1960, on the London-bound platform, that former friends and neighbours Mick Jagger and Keith Richards were reunited. Mick was going to lectures at the London School of Economics; Keith to Sidcup Art College, where he was studying technical illustration. Mick was carrying a pile of blues records, and on the train journey they got talking about what music they liked.

Shortly afterwards Keith joined Mick in a band called Little Boy Blues and the Blue Boys, and the partnership from which the Rolling Stones would develop was born.

I walked out to their childhood homes, past the schools that had divided them. Mick went to the grammar in West Hill, Keith to the technical school one street away in Miskin Road. If Dartford is a suburb, then the little Thirties enclave where Mick and Keith grew up is a suburb of the suburb. Keith lived in a flat above a now-empty shop at 33 Chasillian Road, across the street from a pub called The Dart - referring, if its sign is to be believed, to a river rather than the game of arrows - and a gift shop called Grot, presumably in homage to Reggie Perrin.

First left is Denver Road, where Mick lived at number 39, and in the garden of which, each morning, he went through a daily regime of physical exercise instilled in him by his fitness instructor father. Oh, how the neighbours must have laughed. As I walked along, those old familiar suburban smells of creosote and conifer hedges hit me once again. There was Number 39, with its neat little front garden full of orange marigolds and its semi-detached front freshly pebbledashed. And suddenly I realised that the suburbs were growing on me - that they have a character that is crucially overlooked. After all, if stucco is quite acceptable on New Mexico pueblos, why is pebbledash so derided? If cobblestones and sash windows are OK in Coronation Street, why can't UPVC and pink concrete brick-effect paving be admired in Acacia Avenue?

And then, as I trekked on down Chasillian Road to Wentworth Primary School, where the Glimmer Twins first met as five-year-olds, the answer to my question presented itself. It is because pebbledash, plastic windows and concrete blocks are innately, irrefutably horrible.

The suburbs were beginning to get to me, as they got to Mick and Keith. But before I fled I had to pay homage at one last location - Bexley Hospital, just across the A2 in old Bexley Lane. In fact, this hospital features twice in the Rolling Stones story. In the Seventies, it was the place where Mick's ex-girlfriend, Mari-

anne Faithfull, spent seven months trying to cure her drug addiction. But, in the late Fifties, it had a far more important role in forming the Mick Jagger that we know and love. For it was here

that, working as a porter during his school holidays, Mick lost his virginity, in a cupboard, to a nurse. Proving, once and for all, that, whatever else they may lack, there is sex in the suburbs.

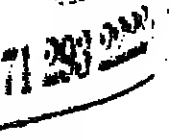
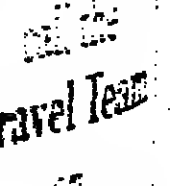
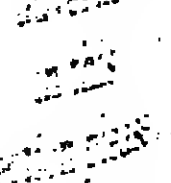
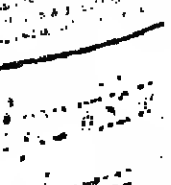
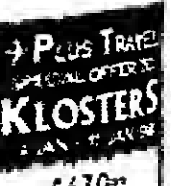
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9/GARDENING



Heaven scent

Winter-flowering plants can produce some of the garden's sweetest smells. Nallo Green offers a guide to the most appealing.

Nothing sells like scent at this time of year. We buy it, often at great expense, for our mothers, our lovers and our spotty little brothers, to splash on and spray under. Perhaps we're trying to conjure up the heady days of summer, when natural scents abound. At Christmas we can't expect the same intensity of perfume in the garden, but even in winter we can satisfy this natural yearning for fragrance by growing scented winter-flowering plants.

Plant scents are part of a plant's adaptation to its habitat. The aromatic oils of rosemary and lavender evolved as a defence against browsing animals. Floral scents have developed side by side with the evolution of pollinators, such as birds, bees, and flies, upon which plants depend for reproduction. The scents produced by plants are quite specific: sweetly-scented flowers attract bees, which are after nectar, whereas flowers pollinated by flies develop a different range of often pungent smells.

True, winter may bring fewer flowers, but many of them are strongly scented, to attract the fewer pollinators around. Their colours are often pale and subtle, revealing instead in surprising shapes and haunting scents.

The white flowers of *Sarcococca* are unassuming, and its evergreen foliage is without much interest, but its scent would rival anything you could buy in a bottle. *S. hookeriana* var. *dygana* is the best, and makes good under-planting for large shrubs, being shade-loving and tolerant of dry conditions.

White and shades of pink distinguish the shrubby, scented, winter-flowering honeysuckles. *Lonicera fragrantissima* and *L. standishii* hide their flowers under their semi-evergreen leaves; *L. x purpusii*, being fully deciduous, displays its clusters of creamy flowers on naked stems, but is equally fragrant.

Abeliophyllum distichum is smothered with ivory-white flowers in February; it needs a sunny, sheltered spot to capture its strong scent. The effect is that of a white forsythia with a spicy fragrance.

For sheer length of flowering and scent, it would be hard to beat *Viburnum x bodnantense* 'Dawn', flowering from October to March and filling the air with deliciously scented, rosy-pink flowers on bare branches. Even a small sprig, brought indoors, fills the room with exquisite fragrance. *V. x b. 'Deben'*, with pure white flowers, equals it for fragrance.

Flowering later in winter and into spring, *Daphne mezereum* is without rival. An upright and deciduous shrub, it is smothered in deep pink and purple flowers of intense fragrance. *Daphne odora* 'Aureomarginata' is as fragrant, though less showy, with deep-pink-and-white flowers, and glossy evergreen leaves edged with yellow.

Pink, purple and white are predominant in the winter garden, but yellows can be found to sharpen up colour schemes and add warmth. During mild spells in late winter, *Azara microphylla*'s clusters of deep yellow flowers release a strong fragrance of vanilla. It has a rather tender disposition, but is worth a try against a south-facing wall, with its favourite moisture-retentive soil.

Chimonanthus praecox, the wintersweet, also needs a sunny spot, though it prefers a drier and poorer soil than the azara.

This is a lovely, hardy shrub, but is for patient gardeners only, as it takes some years to flower. When it is mature, yellow waxy flowers hang from bare branches, so pale that you can almost see through to the purple centres. It is highly fragrant, flowering from December to March, with a sweet, spicy scent which will fill the whole house if it is planted near an open window. The variety 'Luteus' has larger flowers, with a stronger, lemon-yellow colouring, but less scent.

Enhance the colouring of the ordinary wintersweet by associating it with a fragrant mahonia. The best scented variety is *M. japonica*, flowering from December to March, with long, yellow racemes and a lily-of-the-valley fragrance.

To spice up these golds and pale yellows, touches of orange or bronze can be found among the witch-hazels. Strands of



Above, *Daphne odora* 'Aureomarginata'; left, *Sarcococca hookeriana* Photographs: GPL

coppery-orange *Hamamelis x intermedia* 'Jelena', and the red-dish-brown 'Diane', produce a heady scent, looking especially good against evergreens. *Hamamelis mollis*, the common witch-hazel, is well known for its golden-yellow flowers, as is *H. 'Pal-lida'*, a magnificent, sulphur-yellow variety.

It is surprising, also, how many low, ground-covering plants flowering in winter are scented - such as crocuses, cyclamen, sweet violets, primulas and dwarf iris.

In the garden, fragrance can be found packaged in all sorts of natural shapes, colours and sizes. Even in the depths of winter, you can enjoy floral scents without resorting to expensive perfumes in fancy bottles.

CUTTINGS

"Can you tell me whether planting a wisteria in a large container, such as a half barrel, is likely to be successful?" The question was asked earlier this year by Caroline Benwell of Herne Hill, south London and, never having done it myself, I asked for verdicts from those who had.

"Yes," says Kurt Iwnicki of Caerleon, Gwent, who has been growing one for 15 years in a cast-iron wash-boiler, "the kind of thing that used to be in the scullery of every old house. I grow the wisteria as a bush on a short leg and prune it twice a year - in summer and in February. It flowers well and so far shows no ill-effects from its confinement, but it must not be allowed to become dry. It gets a heavy top-dressing of garden compost each spring. Because frost has damaged the expanding flower buds some years recently, I now wrap a piece of fleece over the top at night at the crucial time. There is a good historical precedent for growing wisterias in containers. They

are mentioned growing this way in *The Tale of Genji*, written by Lady Murasaki Shikibu around AD1000."

"Yes," says Peter Stevens, of Cardiff, who planted a wisteria in a plastic dustbin in 1980. The bin is about 21in tall and 18in in diameter and the tree is now about 3ft tall. "It has grown steadily with flowers ever since. I have trained it to resemble a small parasol, essentially because I have a tiny back garden, and didn't want it to spread too much. The thrill I get from seeing those elegant pendants at blossom time takes some beating. Last season, during a very high wind, one of the curving branches snapped off, so I had to bandage the two ends together."

The verdict seems to be favourable.

Two seedlings and 30 seeds of an ancient pine, discovered three years ago in the Wollemi National Park in New South Wales, have left Australia for the first time in 200 million years. They have been sent to the Royal

Botanic Gardens, Kew, where the seeds will be kept at a temperature of -20°C in Kew's millennium seed bank. Scientists say that it should remain viable for more than 200 years.

An *Etesia* ride-on mower is among the things that the garden designer Dan Pearson has chosen for the Conran Foundation Collection to represent good design this year at the Design Museum, London. Mr Pearson had a budget of £27,000 to spend on the things that for him represent design perfection: hats by Crisj van den Munckhof, a MHWay rucksack and a Sony Camcorder are other choices. The exhibition of the Foundation Collection, which opened this month, runs until the beginning of March. The Design Museum at Shad Thames, London SE1 2YD is open Monday to Friday, 11.30am-6pm, and weekends, 12pm-6pm. Admission £5.

Anna Pavord

INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY TRAVEL



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YOUR PRACTICAL GUIDE TO HOLIDAYS

Metal-guzzling trees for a clean, green future

The green implications of planting willows may run deep: research suggests that these scrub plants can be used as natural decontaminators on polluted land. Daniel Butler reports.

Housing is the biggest threat to Britain's countryside. Because of the growth in single occupancy and our increased lifespan, we will need up to 4.4 million new homes by 2016. Where will we put them? Thanks to a legacy of industrial pollution, urban sites are in short supply, but new research suggests that help may come from an unlikely source: urban woodland.

According to Dr Nicholas Dickinson of Liverpool John Moores University, fast-growing scrub "weeds" such as willow and birch can act as natural decontaminators. Backed by the National Urban Forestry Unit, local authorities and private industry, he has put together a research proposal to monitor the ability of trees to absorb pollutants on 15 contaminated sites around the Black Country.

If his theories prove justified, the implications are certainly exciting. Our industrial heritage has polluted much of the vacant land to and around our cities with heavy metals such as lead, zinc and cadmium, even low levels of which make a site unsuitable for agriculture or development. Conventional remediation techniques are difficult and unsatisfactory; they are also expensive. As a result many of Britain's cities contain areas that have lain unused for decades, or even centuries.

Planting trees on such sites has long been recognised as a cheap alternative to treatment (the most elaborate scheme rarely exceeds £3,000 per acre). Until 20 years ago this tended to be purely cosmetic, designed to hide slag heaps or factory sites, but then trees began to be valued for stabilising potentially dangerous soil. This is because fallen leaves increase the soil humus and tree roots absorb water, both of which reduce pollutants leaching out into surrounding watercourses.

Now Dr Dickinson's preliminary research suggests that they can do much more. The underlying theory is nothing new - scientists have known for some time about "hyperaccumulators" (plants such as the cabbage family, that can absorb high levels of pollutants), but so far these have had limited practical applications. Even though some can absorb up to 1,000 parts per million (ppm), the problem is that they are usually slow growing, and there is the problem of subsequent disposal. So research has concentrated on translocating genes from hyperaccumulators into more marketable crops. Dr Dickinson believes this may well prove to be impracticable. "If it were as easy to put the gene from one plant into another as some make out, we'd have had wheat with its own nitrogen-fixing roots long ago," he points out.

Instead he has concentrated on willow: "The beauty of this species is that it hybridises easily," he says. "This means that if one type is very pollution tolerant, while another is high yielding, you can cross them to get the best of both."

The results so far are encouraging. Cadmium,

for example, is one of the worst pollutants, rendering land unsuitable for agriculture at just 3 ppm. Taking soil containing cadmium at 6-8 ppm, Dr Harrison's team found a remarkable improvement: "Our trials suggest willows could more than halve the level in 16 years," he says. To contrast, it would take 60 years to achieve a reduction of just 10 per cent if the land were left to recover on its own. "They are less successful in clearing zinc and lead," Dr Harrison admits. "But that's because zinc is found in much higher concentrations and lead is much more stable, therefore difficult to extract."

Although further research is needed on the risk of creating new problems, so far these look relatively insignificant. The most serious danger to date seems to be that as the soil improves, so worms may eat the heavy metals that are released. These could then move up the food chain into blackbirds, for example. "But in practice we think there's no real danger," says Dr Dickinson. "Blackbirds prefer woodland edges and open ground - and so by planting trees on contaminated ground we're actually reducing their contact with the pollution."

If Dr Harrison's trials go according to plan, urban trees could play a major part in improving our cities and in protecting the Green Belt. Certainly he believes that coppicing has the potential to be used widely in the near future. Not only would it give value to land that is currently worthless: it would also reduce the legal risks for developments in neighbouring areas, and produce a valuable crop. Who knows, it could also add a new - and more welcome - meaning to the phrase "urban jungle".



Pollution buster: the grey willow

Photograph: Ardea

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Smart, with GSOH, seeks attractive lady, 28-35, for fun, travel and relationship. London. 02452

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Long-haired, Oxford man, mid-30s, seeking stunningly attractive, outgoing and humorous female. 02452

PRESTON MALE
Professional, tall, optimistic male, seeks a fun-loving female, who enjoys the life of a single lady, 35-39, for romance and relationship. London. 02452

ANY QUESTIONS?
If you should have any questions about any aspect of our Voice Personals service, please call FREE on 0800 216 318.

100% GENUINE
Fun-loving, warm, professional female, early 40s, 5'7", enjoys walking, cycling, cinema, theatre, to be a partner, if you are a similar male, 40-50, I would love to hear from you. 02452

SOMERSET AREA
Attractive female, early 40s, own career, teenage son, likes all the best beach holidays, seaside walks, food, wine, good conversation, seeking male, 38-48, GSOH, to enjoy the above with. 02452

SOUTH COAST LADY
Genuine female, 40-something, seeks intelligent, caring male, similar age, for lasting friendship. 02452

CANDLELIGHT
Attractive, feminine blonde, 37, seeks tall, professional male, for friendship, possible relationship. Midlands. 02452

FRIENDSHIP FIRST
Unusually intelligent, professional female, enjoys travel, horse riding, skiing, cinema, conversation, travel, seeks attractive, witty male, 40-50, for Christmas parties, friendship, possible relationship. Devon/Wiltshire. 02452

SOMEONE SPECIAL
Attractive, intelligent, professional, brunette female, 40s, 5'6", with a warm heart, enjoys cultural activities, walks, food & wine, interesting conversation, seeks single, fun, professional male, 35-45, for friendship/relationship. London area. 02452

PROFESSIONAL CHAP
Smart, with GSOH, seeks attractive lady, 28-35, for fun, travel and relationship. London. 02452

BARNEY RUBBLE
Blond, broad and bawdy male, 37, seeks cute, outgoing, affectionate lady, 25-35, for a lasting relationship and to settle down in Bedford suburbs. London. 02452

NEW BOY ON THE BLOCK
Outgoing, well-travelled partner, 40, new to London, seeks a female, 35-45, to share his life and the joys of London. 02452

SPICE UP MY LIFE
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These men have the bottle to challenge beer taxes

Yeoman rebellion: the Hook Norton brewery, owned for five generations by one family, is supporting Stewart Neame's challenge over British beer taxes Photographs: Dod Miller

A rural rebellion is taking place among the drinking classes. Richard D North reports.

This isn't exactly the Peasants' Revolt, and the affluent master brewer Stewart Neame of Shepherd Neame, Faversham, hardly brings the socialist John Ball - "the Mad Priest" - to mind. Still, six centuries after Wat Tyler got the countrymen of Kent to march on London, Mr Neame - who may go down as the Mad Brewer for his pains - is leading a yeoman rebellion which may benefit the beer drinkers. They'll be paying more for some of their ale, it's true - but it'll more likely be decent English beer in a decent local.

The cause is popular among fellow members of the Independent Family Brewers of Britain (IFBB). The Hook Norton brewery, near Banbury, owned for five generations by one family, and perhaps the most picturesque in the country, is amongst many helping to fund it.

Mr Neame's revolt will surface in the High Court on 17 and 18 December, when he uses the judicial review process to

challenge the Government's declared intention to raise the duty on beer and wine by 3 per cent, in line with inflation, due to come in on 1 January 1998. It is the latest of a series of taxation blows that have vastly increased the differential between French liquor duty and ours.

Rural Kent was always only a semi-detached part of the South-east, and never shared all its affluence. At least, though, it had the economic hum of Dover, but now even that is proving a drawback. At first glance, the "crime" Mr Neame is complaining about looks victimless. Middle-income Britain piles into its Volvo estates to pick up pre-Christmas wine bargains in Calais, and lesser mortals are nipping over in the Mondeo for tubby little bottles of French lager. There is, of course, something absurd, let alone uneconomic, about hordes of people driving miles - many of them heavily laden - to milk a bureaucratic nonsense. But most people feel they are getting something for nothing, and cry "I've la differential!" with the rest.

The cheapness of French beer has attracted real crime as well, however. Two men currently face charges for attempted

murder by shooting in Dover. Young dole-scrouring "runners" from Merseyside, Clydeside and Tyneside import a new criminality from inner cities, as well as hand-rolling tobacco, and bootleg beer, in white vans from Calais.

The wider crime is economic, claims the trade. Mr Neame's mostly rural brewing colleagues mostly manage to keep the wolf from the door: their sometimes murky, often gutsy and nearly always gasless product is fashionable, and they have developed export markets. But they argue that their situation is serious, not least because many of them own pubs, too. "I'm just an embattled businessman who is losing one quarter of my pub trade to the French," says Mr Neame. "In Kent one pint in three comes from Calais. Everyone has a stock of French beer in their garage. Even my relatives give me French stuff at barbecues." He says 45 of his pubs have had to close because of the differential, though he has bought others to replace them.

Hook Norton, up in north Oxfordshire, where the loss is claimed to be more like one pint in 20, shares the complaint. James Clarke, the firm's 26-year-old "sec-

ond brewer" to his MD and chief brewer father, David, says: "Our production peaked in 1993 and has seen a slight decline since then. We think the duty differential must have something to do with it." The firm still uses an ancient steam engine for most of its power. In other areas, though, there has been some modernisation - stainless steel came in to supplement older wooden vats (or "tuns"), during the post-Seventies, and now halted, expansion.

Only the most imaginative pub-keeping, such as practised in their Butcher's Arms in King's Sutton, near Banbury, with its curvy nights and a chintzier feel than of old, keeps Hook Norton's inn-keepers busy. Its new style is part of a wider trend. The Wellington pub, in Wellington, Herefordshire, typifies the best of it: a nonbound Edwardian pub, it has since July been newly themed as a restaurant-pub more rustic-looking than a *Country Living* cover. Village people have been flocking in droves. Spit and sawdust is no longer attractive, even to dedicated country-lovers.

But such pubs have to contend everywhere with cut-price booze. It was one thing to see their trade suppressed by the high

duties which for decades made pubs and off-licences a Treasury milk-cow. At least then, no one could escape the imposts. But the UK signed up to Maastricht and the Single Market was introduced in 1993. New rules came in which, in effect, allowed anyone to bring in almost any quantity of beer, wine and spirits provided it was for personal or family use (including large get-togethers such as weddings). Mr Neame says that at this point, harmonisation of duties became crucial.

"The Government claims that a 1992 Council of Ministers agreement means that countries must only agree to impose a minimum duty, and that was low," he says. "I'm saying the Treaty of Rome makes it illegal to make a bad matter worse; our duty is already out of line, and shouldn't be made more so."

"Even though the French doubled their excise rate last year, it is a sixth of Britain's. However, the trade isn't arguing for equalising duty. We need to set in train a downward trend in British duties," says Peter Lewis, director of the Wine and Spirit Association. "We just do not know how much excise must be reduced to make it

no longer viable to go across to Calais, but let's have a programme which would halve the duty differential within five years, and travel along that path until the cross-border shopping cases, and then hold it there."

The beer trade, and in particular the pub trade, had for years been perceived as a mature industry which videos, drink-driving laws, and the death of working-class culture had put into decline anyway. But it is at least an overwhelmingly British sector of the economy. The Brewers and Licensed Retailers Association suggested in a memorandum to the Treasury this July that Britain's economy and tax revenues are damaged far more by the present differentials than they would be by a reduced rate of duty. The figures are, of course, vehemently disputed, with Customs and Excise replying that high taxation makes good health as well as economic sense. The Treasury's settled view will be available to ministers by the end of the year, following a consultation process and review. For now, and in court next week the line is likely to be repeated, the Government insists that its right to levy taxation is paramount.

Why this year is a fallow time for deer

For anybody involved with the management of deer, a persistent aggravation is the way the price of venison fluctuates wildly from one year to the next.

At present, in the south of England, the going rate for fallow deer is 90p per pound for whole carcasses - with head and feet off, but the skin still on - and for roe, generally considered the finest meat, £1.20. Yet these amounts are more than 50 per cent down on last year's, and in the Highlands the price of the ubiquitous red deer has crashed from the 1996 high of £2 per pound to a wretched 60p. On big estates, which depend largely on venison sales for income, this amounts to a damaging loss.

External events, apparently unconnected, often have a strong influence on the market for deer meat. Worst of all, in recent memory, was the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl in April 1986, which spread radioactive debris over much of northern Europe and put the fear of God into the West Germans - nor-

mally the greatest consumers. This drastically reduced demand for all venison and knocked prices down to a new low.

Another sharp fall was caused, paradoxically, by the collapse of Communism in and after 1989. When the Iron Curtain at last came down, a flood of Polish and East German venison poured into West Germany, swamping the market there and, in a knock-on effect, cutting the appetite for Scottish imports.

Last year saw a record price surge, partly because of the scare about BSE, which turned a good many people from beef to venison; another factor was that imports from New Zealand temporarily dried up, because deer farmers there were consolidating their breeding stock and culling fewer beasts than usual.

The result was a dramatic rise not only in prices, but also in poaching. All over Britain, from Cornwall to Cumbria, gangs were out at night with lamps, rifles, shotguns and lurchers; with a red deer hind (for instance) suddenly worth nearly £200, they made instant fortunes.

In Mortimer Forest, near

Ludlow, at least 100 fallow deer were killed illegally, and this winter stocks are so depleted that the Forestry Commission has reduced its projected annual cull by three-quarters. The poachers, being indiscriminate, have, of course, wrecked long-term plans

DUFF HART-DAVIS

for managing the herd, besides losing wounded animals in the dark.

Outside factors thus drive venison prices to some extent, but the truth is that the home market has never been effectively developed. Wild venison is almost fat-free, and entirely uncontaminated by artificial foodstuffs; yet sales in the United Kingdom remain relatively small, and probably 60 per cent of the country's output still goes abroad, principally to Germany.

A courageous attempt to increase home consumption was made by Highland Venison,

a co-operative of forest owners who joined forces with the Safeway supermarket chain to promote sales in this country. Instead of sending whole carcasses abroad, as most Scottish dealers do, the firm began cutting and packaging venison like other meat, and made some headway. Then funds ran short, and the company was sold and has now been taken over by a Danish firm, so that export is likely to become its main business once again.

Attempts to increase home sales of game in general are being made by the Game Marketing Executive, which was set up last year with funds from the Ministry of Agriculture and the Countryside Business Group. By talking to supermarkets, by training chefs and organising a Chef of the Year competition for game cookery, the executive reckons it is making progress. The UK market for game, about £17m in 1992, is now thought to be worth £34m, and is expected to rise to £50m by 2002 as people in search of healthy food become more aware of the possibilities on offer.

At present the venison sold by supermarket chains such as

Sainsbury and Waitrose all comes from farms that can guarantee more consistency than dealers in wild deer; farmed animals are killed relatively young, whereas a stag shot in the Highlands may have been scrambling up and down precipitous slopes for eight or 10 years, and may, if not treated well, turn out as tough as old boots.

There is no doubt that in the past much Scottish venison has been poorly handled. A carcass often has to be dragged off the hill, through peat bogs and flooded burns, before it reaches a vehicle or a pony. It may then spend several days hanging in an inadequately chilled larder before being collected.

In spite of all-round improvements recently, the problem with wild venison, particularly in England, remains that there is no central marketing organisation. Instead, there are hundreds of individual sellers, who make life difficult for themselves by refusing to club together.

If they did, they might secure better prices - and certainly it is galling for them to see what a mark-up butchers make. At present a fallow car-

case, weighing 70lb in the skin, fetches only £63 for the landowner; in the run-up to Christmas, the butcher will have no difficulty selling each 1lb haunch at £4 a pound, so that the haunches alone bring him £288. He then has the sad-

de - 8lb at £4.50, ie £36 - and a dozen pounds of stewing steak off the forequarters and neck at £1.50; total £118. His return on the beast is thus £142, well over 100 per cent.

Still, that's the trade. The question, now, is whether the threat-

ened ban on beef on the bone will drive venison prices up again. So far there is no sign of any upward movement - and for the time being people in our part of the world are snapping up bony joints of red beef as though there were no tomorrow.

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NATURE NOTE

Alarm calls form an important element in wild creatures' defences, and it is fascinating to find how often one species warns another of danger. A wood-pigeon, for instance, can perfectly well leave a tree silently, but when it departs with a loud clap of its wings, fellow-pigeons, rooks, crows, pheasants and

others get immediate notice that something unpleasant is in the offing. Blackbirds moan owls with high, hysterical twittering, but switch to a low "tuk, tuk" whenever they see a ground predator such as a fox, cat or stoat. Wrens tick like alarm clocks if they detect that kind of prowler, and a cock

pheasant which persists in giving off single calls has almost certainly spotted a fox. Jays, on the other hand, screech indiscriminately at all enemies, whether grounded or airborne.

Male deer generally remain silent, except during the annual rut; but females give hoarse barks when they see

or scent danger, and the alarm call of a fallow doe, for example, will communicate itself to a roe or a muntjac. Humans, in other words, can glean much information about events in the countryside purely by listening.

Duff Hart-Davis

12/INDOOR

Peace in tiny pieces

Fiddly, absorbing and very rewarding. That was the verdict on a mosaic-making course, as Sally Staples found out.

Mosaics keep Michelle Heydon awake at night. Since she tried a two-day course in the art of cutting up tiny pieces of tiles and arranging them into intricate patterns, she spends sleepless hours planning her designs, and has seriously considered changing her life.

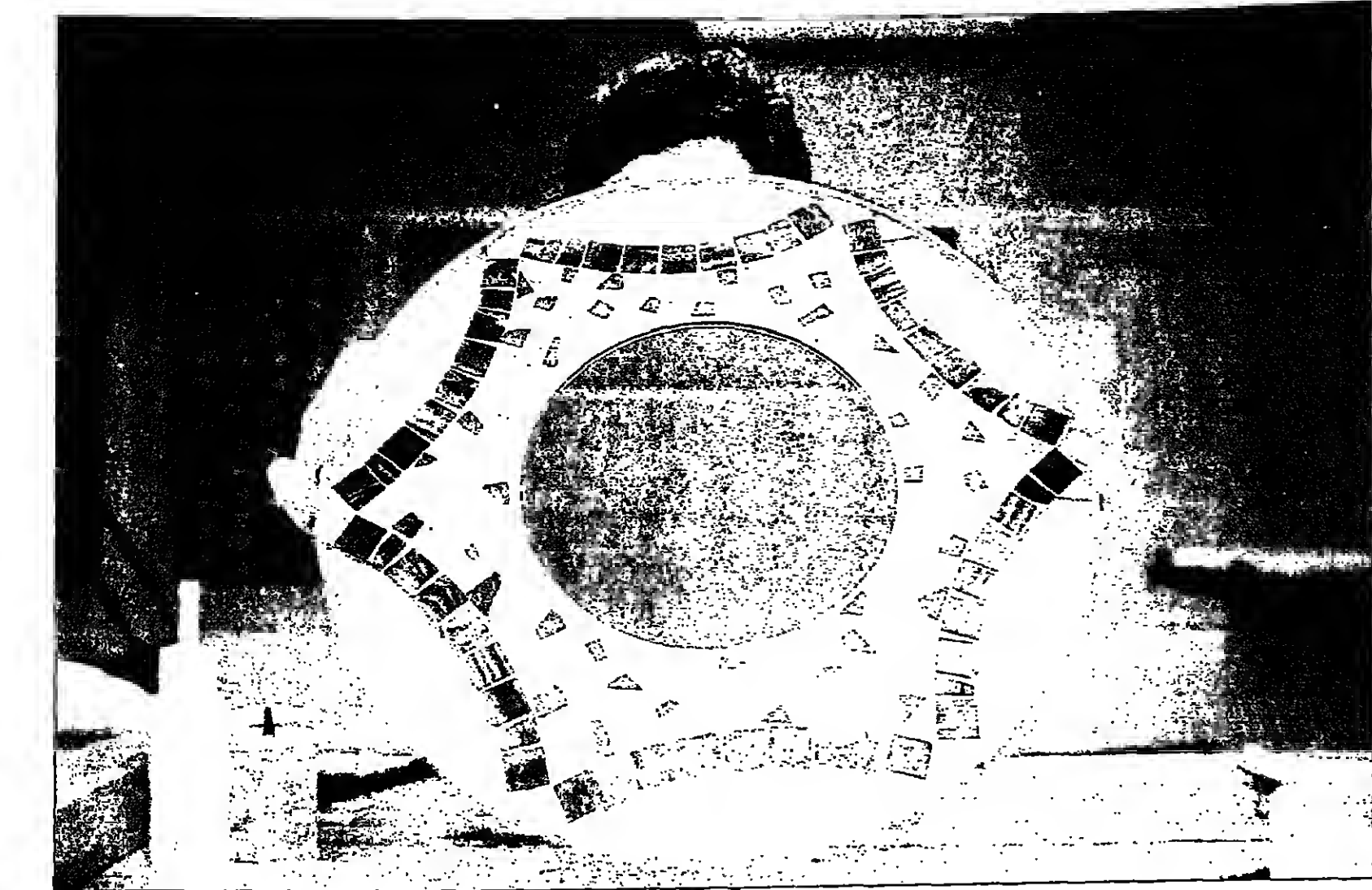
Michelle, who works with computers in Cambridge, longs to give it all up and earn her living making mosaics. "It's my aspiration. I like all sorts of craft, but I really love the idea of doing something that will be here in years to come," she says.

She is sitting at a table in a large, airy studio in Sussex attending a four-day course in mosaics run by West Dean College. In front of her is a 4ft by 2ft wooden frame for a bedhead, displaying an elaborate design of flowers, stems and leaves. She is planning the painstaking job of filling in the design with tiny pieces of mosaic.

"It's taken me three days just to do one corner. It's a big project, but I'll take it home and keep at it until I've finished," she says. "I'm a full-time working mother and this is my escape. I'm planning brown and yellow lilies, cream tulips, a terracotta background and black stems. This is my second course. After the first one I got so carried away, I bought £70 worth of glass."

All around her other men and women are busy working on more modest mosaics in ceramics, glass, marble and terracotta. Monty Raphael, from London, a retired businessman turned psychotherapist, says that what he enjoys most about the process is breaking a material up into fragments in order to rebuild it into something whole.

"Originally I was attracted by the colour



of the mosaics I saw in Italy and Cyprus. The richness captured me. I had been groping around to find some sort of craft ... Then I came on a mosaic course and decided this was it."

Monty is working from a photograph, copying a 16th-century mosaic he admired outside a church in Crete. "I find it unquestionably therapeutic. I don't know what meditation is, but I imagine it to be rather like making a mosaic. It is so absorbing that after a certain time you forget everything else."

The college at West Dean is, in fact, a splendidly preserved Edwardian house set in 6,000 acres. It offers a number of full-

time and short residential courses. During their stay students may wander the huge rooms, use the library and admire the pictures, antiques and big game trophies.

Sophie MacKinnon, who is on the mosaic course with her sister-in-law Fiona, is full of enthusiasm. "I'll definitely be back. The atmosphere here is so relaxing - and I've discovered it takes the most incredible concentration. I've decided that one day I'd like to do my kitchen floor in black and white lizards."

Sophie and Fiona are designing mosaic patterns around a circular mirror, exploring patterns and colours with glass and ceramic pieces. Fiona, a nursing sister, said she

had previously had no idea how much time it would take, or how absorbing it would be. "It's so peaceful and undemanding - not a bit like work. And yet there is something growing in front of you. It's great fun being able to try different materials and colours, and getting such helpful advice."

Also designing a mirror surround is Stephanie Schofield, who used to work in banking in Surrey, and her lawyer husband Brian. Both had been interested in classical mosaics and decided to have a go themselves. Stephanie began by decorating a 6-in-square tile, to get the feel of cutting, sticking and firing. Brian, a retired lecturer from Cambridge, tried mosaics after enjoying a

colour the grouting should be," she says. It comes in black, white or grey and whichever you choose makes a huge difference to the overall finish.

Brian is happy to leave the more ambitious mirror to his wife, and contents himself with working on a selection of tiles. "I rather enjoy using the tile nippers. It gives me a sense of power," he says, as he demonstrates how to cut a 1-in-square tile into 16 tiny squares. "Having done this yourself, you look again at the classical patterns and realise just what those workmen must have gone through."

John Ball, a retired lecturer from Cambridge, tried mosaics after enjoying a

Tiny tiles: mosaic work is 'unquestionably therapeutic', according to students at West Dean College in Sussex
Photograph: Andrew Hassan

course on stained glass. "I wanted to do a mosaic for a set of paving slabs in the garden," he said. "The tutor here, Emma Bigge, is absolutely terrific, and she has brought old bits and pieces of tiles and pebbles as well as some expensive cut marble. She has put up an exhibition of her work, which is very inspiring."

Emma herself says many of her students have no experience of any other craft. "I get all ages on the courses, and tremendous enthusiasm for mosaics from both men and women. When they start, they find the technique takes over and they are so busy cutting and sticking and arranging that they have no time to question their own creativity. The results are often very encouraging. I find that men tend to be more geometric in their designs, and women more naturalistic."

Emma was originally inspired by watching a TV programme about mosaicists in the Italian community. She took up her calling with enthusiasm and has since won commissions from the Sultan of Oman, and Terence Conran, for his London restaurants Quaglinos and Mezzo. She has also just completed a mosaic at the entrance to The Groucho, the artists' and writers' club in Soho.

Emma Bigge takes courses at West Dean College, West Dean, Chichester, West Sussex, PO18 0QZ (01243 811301). A four-day residential course costs £222 (£143 for non-residents). She also teaches at Missenden Abbey, Great Missenden, Bucks (01494 890296) and runs her own mosaic workshop at Unit B, 4431-449 Holloway Road, London N7 (0171-263 2997).

Correction On 29 November the feature on silk painting at the Wye Valley Arts Centre contained a mistaken telephone number. The correct number is 01594 530214 or 01291 689463.

GAMES

BAWN O'BEIRNE RANELAGH DON'T JUNK IT - USE IT

Some months ago, I explained how to make a see-through bread bin out of two plastic water containers. At the time I warned against attempting to use the object for those Gallic extravaganzas known as French sticks, but for those who persist in huying ectomorphic loaves, here is the solution: the telescopic bread bottle.

Start with two or three two-litre plastic drink bottles. Drink the drink and wash and dry the bottles. If you have shopped carefully, you will find that you have bottles of slightly varying diameters.

Take the widest of the bottles and slice it in half at its middle. Then cut the central



sections from the other bottles, discarding the top and bottom.

If you have judged matters well, you will now be able to assemble an extendable bread container, with the top and bottom of the first bottle joined by sections from the others. And the sections will slide, trombone-like, to fit the bread perfectly.

GAME OF THE WEEK WILLIAM HARTSTON

James, eight, tells me that I am going to have to put in some practice. He's been practising a good deal and he is beating me too easily. The game is *Tumble Bugs* and it is both amusing and unbelievably vicious. ("Tumble Bugs, Lose Your Friends," says the press release.)

What makes this game different from other shooting-down-spaceship video games is the clever 3D graphics which allow a simulation of rocky terrain (you can choose from a variety of planets to fight on), and a range of spaceships with different powers. What makes it even more different is that it's not made by a games company, but a rather serious company called Voxar that specialises in graphics for medical and scientific applications.

They invented *Tumble Bugs* as a demonstration of the capabilities of their new graphical software, but the game was so well received that they decided to market it. At present it is available only over the Internet, on CD-Rom (playable on Windows 95 Pentium) for £15. You can buy it or download a fully playable demo at: www.tumblebugs.com

You can play solo (against the computer) or one against one (on the same keyboard) Must go now. I've got some practising to do.

PANDORA MELLY GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

John Julius Norwich, 68, writer and broadcaster

My game is collecting literary snippets: anything in writing that takes my fancy. It may be funny, or moving, or extraordinary: a short poem, a paragraph of dazzling prose, something I've read on the back of a hotel room door or the synopsis of an opera. Absolutely anything: all is grist to the mill.

It began in 1958 when I joined the Foreign Service and was sent to Beirut, which in those days was a sort of Clapham Junction of the world's airlines. Anybody who flew to the east came down in Beirut.

Many exciting people came to the house, and one Christmas my mother gave me a beautiful visitor's book bound in goatskin for when people came to dinner or stayed overnight. Alas, the moment I unwrapped it, a curfew was declared, and absolutely nobody arrived for the next 10 months, which was a great disappointment.

One day I remembered that I had a little collection of things on rough bits of paper in various suitcases, and I decided to copy out

everything in my very best handwriting, and have a commonplace book instead.

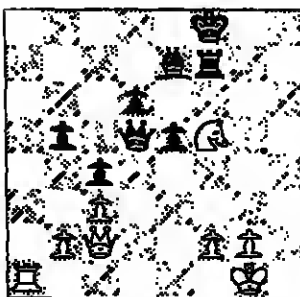
By the late Sixties, what had started as a few scraps became a Collection with a capital C. I'd assembled about three or four albums, which I thought was probably enough to make a nice little anthology. The "come up and see my etchings" syndrome - it's no fun having a collection if you can't share it.

Every year since 1970, I've put together a collection of bits out of the albums and published it as *A Christmas Cracker*, which I send round to my friends.

The only expense of this slightly ridiculous hobby is every five or six years when I buy myself a new, very beautiful book bound in goatskin, which I think is cheap at the price.

The 1997 edition of John Julius Norwich's *A Christmas Cracker* is available from Heywood Hill booksellers at 10 Curzon Street, London W1 (0171-629-0647), price £4.50. Earlier compilations, *Christmas Crackers* and *More Christmas Crackers* (Penguin, £10.99), can be found at most good bookshops and quite a lot of bad ones.

CHESS: WILLIAM HARTSTON



To begin with the best bit, it's White to play and win in the diagram position, which comes from Adams-Georgiadze, played on Thursday in the second round of the world championship in Groningen in the Netherlands. Adams finished it off beautifully with 1.Qd2!! when 1...Qxd2 allows 2.Ra8+ Bb8 3.Rxd8 mate. Instead Georgiadze played 1...Qc6, but after 2.Qh6+ Ke8 3.Qe6 he resigned. There is nothing to be done about the threats of 4.Ra7 or 4.Nxd6+ Qxd6 5.Ra8+.

So Adams needs only a draw in the second game to go through to the third round. The other two British players in the competition both drew the first games of their second-round matches. Sadler as Black against Ehlvest, and Short as White against Korchnoi.

Meanwhile, two of the favourites were having very different experiences. Anand won an impressive game against Nikolic, but just look at what happened to Vassily Ivanchuk:

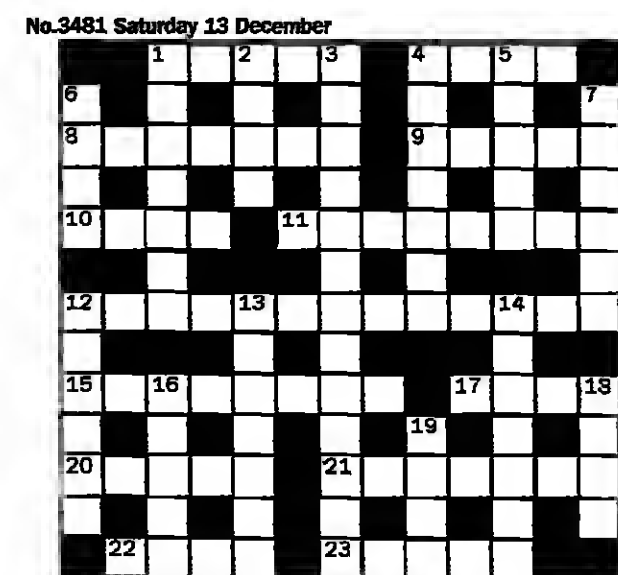
White: Yasser Seirawan
Black: Vassily Ivanchuk
1 d4 Nf6 12 Qh6 Ndc5
2 c4 g6 13 Rd1 Qb6
3 Nc3 Bg7 14 Bb1 Ke7
4 e4 d6 15 f4 exf4
5 Bd3 c5 16 Rf1 Rf8
6 d5 a5 17 Qxd4 f6
7 Nge2 Na6 18 dxc5 Qxc6
8 B Nd7 19 Nd4 Qe8
9 Be3 Bb6 20 Nd5+ Kd8
10 Qd2 Bxc3 21 Qxd6 Bd7
11 Qxc3 c6 22 Nb5 resigns

Black's plan of exchanging his black-squared bishop with 9...Bb6 (when 10.Bxb6 is met by Qb4+) was all very well, but he began to miss the piece rather badly when his d-pawn needed a defender.

Anand's finish was very powerful. At the end, 37.Kg2 Qe2+ 38.Kh3 Qf1+ 39.Kg4 h5+ 40.Kg5 Bf6 is mate.

White: Predrag Nikolic
Black: Viswanathan Anand
1 d4 d5 20 Rc4 axb4
2 c4 c6 21 axb4 Rxb8
3 Nc3 Nf6 22 e4 Nc7
4 Nf3 e6 23 Rfc1 Nb5
5 Bg5 h6 24 Nde5 Rd8
6 Bxd6 Qxd6 25 Nxc6 Bxc6
7 e3 Nd7 26 Rxc6 Ra3
8 Bd3 dxc4 27 Qd4 Nxd4
9 Bxc4 g6 28 Nxd4 Rxd4
10 0-0 Bg7 29 Rc8+ Kh7
11 b4 0-0 30 Qc6 Rd2
12 Rc1 Qe7 31 Re7 Qd8
13 Qh3 Nb6 32 g3 Rf3
14 Bd3 Rd8 33 Rf1 Rxd2
15 Ne4 Nd5 34 Rxd2 Qd1+
16 a3 Bd7 35 Kg2 Rxf2+
17 Nc5 Be8 36 Kxf2 Bd4+
18 Bb1 b6 White resigned
19 Nd3 a5

CONCISE CROSSWORD



- ACROSS
- Place for mooring (5)
 - Stupify (4)
 - Large primate (7)
 - House (5)
 - Consumes (4)
 - Sown (8)
 - Boxing category (13)
 - Intimidate (8)
 - Sprain (4)
 - Decree (5)
 - Deadlock (7)
 - Remainder (4)
 - Fielding position (5)
- DOWN
- Priest's headgear (7)
 - Part in play (4)
 - Tragic (13)
 - Enthusiast (7)
 - Nothing (coll.) (5)
 - Fit of fever (14)
 - Outlaw (6)
 - Legendary (6)
 - Natural environment (7)
 - Contradict (7)
 - Oily fruit (5)
 - Structural member of ship (4)
 - Gemstone (4)

Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:
ACROSS: 1 Knicker, 5 Hurr (Mussouri), 9 Aghad, 10 Calhoun, 11 Sales pitch, 14 Cash registers, 16 Silhouette, 20 Marini, 21 Dingo, 22 Nuke, 23 Esmeralda, DOWN: 1 Knapsack, 3 Idealist, 5 Kudos, 4 Rocking chairs, 6 Exam, 7 Reel, 8 Abacus, 12 Teletium, 13 Asteroid, 15 Raisin, 17 Undue, 18 Aztec, 19 Arid.

BRIDGE: ALAN HIRON

Game all; dealer South

North	East
♠ 8 2	♠ K Q 5 4
♥ K J 8 6	♥ 2
♦ A 4	♦ Q J 9 5 2
♣ A 9 8 7 3	♣ K 4 2

South	West
♠ A J 10 9 7 6 3	♠ none
♥ A Q 10 9 7	♥ 5 4 3
♦ K	♦ 10 8 7 6 3
♣ none	♣ J 10 6 5

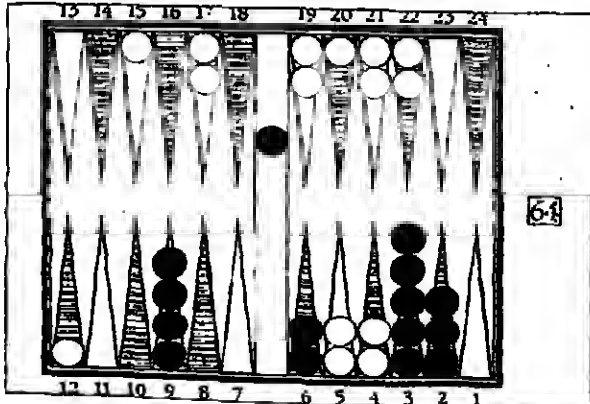
More disasters are attributable to "basty play to the first trick" than to anything else. Here, for a change, it was basty play to the second trick that was South's undoing. South opened 1♣. North responded 2♦ and South rebid 2♥. They were apparently forcing to game, so North could agree trumps with a simple raise to 3♥. A welter of cue-bids followed and it became clear to South that the partnership held everything it needed except ♠K. Against the final contract of 6♥, West led the ♠Q to dummy's ace.

Without deep thought, South noted the solidity of his trump suit and decided to play on cross-ruff lines. His plan was simple: he would cash the ace of spades and concede a spade. Even when the defenders got in and led a trump, he would then make a spade, two diamonds, a club and eight trump tricks.

He soon discovered the hitch when West ruffed the ace of spades, now there was no way to avoid another loser in spades. Any suggestions?

A better plan, after winning the club, is to play a round of trumps. When both opponents follow, draw the remaining trumps, ending in dummy, and lead ♠8, running it if not covered. Now declarer is home however the spades divide. If East holds all four, there is no problem; if West holds all four, a ruffing finesse can be taken; and if the suit divides 3-1, only one ruff is necessary to establish the rest of the spades.

BACKGAMMON: CHRIS BRAY

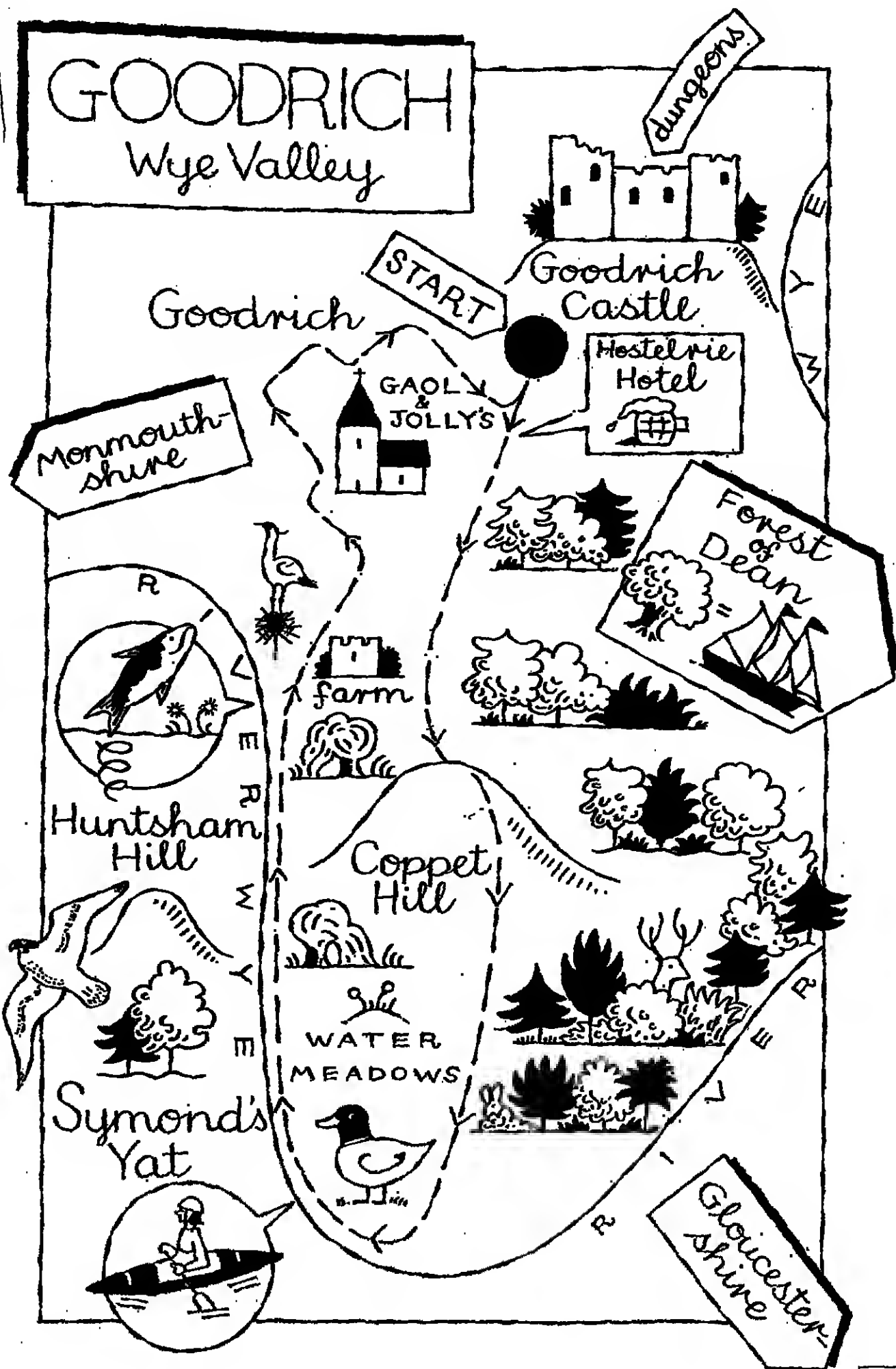


White has been playing a 4-5 back game and has hit a very early shot. Black has compounded his problem by staying on the bar and now both sides have a decision to make. Should White double? Should Black take?

Looking at it from White's side it is easy to see that by the time it is his turn to roll again he may well have lost his market. Black will have an easy drop. Any sequence where White makes his 5-point and Black stays on the bar (or enters with 14, 24 or 15) will produce a position where Black will have a clear drop. As White will make his 5-point with all but seven rolls (66, 64, 46, 61, 16, 42, 24) it should be clear that White has a very strong double.

What about the take? What are Black's strengths? His main asset is his lead in the race. Before the roll he leads by 56 points (96-52). In addition, his men on 9-point can still be used to attack White if he leaves a blot in Black's home board. As noted above, White has seven rolls that don't cover the 5-point. Finally he should recognise that White's army is somewhat split, with 10 men in one half of the board and five in the other - a typical result of playing a back game. It will take him some time to coordinate his forces to restrain Black's last man.

More often than not, Black will drop this double. In the chouette from which the position was taken, all four team members - none renowned for dropping - passed the box's double. Although Black's position is far from ideal, as often happens in backgammon the sum of a number of possibilities, each of which is unlikely in itself, is sufficient to give Black enough chances to take. Roll-outs confirm that Black has a thin, but correct, take.



Kingfishers, castles and trails of the river bank

A walk around the village of Goodrich encompasses more or less everything you might hope to see in the Wye valley: spectacular views, the river, black-and-white Herefordshire houses and a ruined castle. Catherine Stebbings sets out.

Continue down the path into the wood that clings to the side of the hill. Sycamores give way to a dense covering of coppiced hazel, gnarled silver birch and dark green yews. Among the undergrowth of brambles and bracken are scatterings of wild marjoram, euphorbia and dog's mercury. The woods are inhabited by foxes, badgers, rabbits, squirrels, and roe and fallow deer.

church. The mellow, pinkish stone and simple spire belie the grandeur of the linenfold-panelled walls inside, which were brought here from Goodrich Court when it was demolished in 1950. (The church is often locked; key available from the village shop). It is a pleasant church, but not spectacular, and many points of interest – such as the perpendicular east window – can be admired from outside. There is a stone seat in the churchyard for tired, contemplative walkers.

Start at the car park for Goodrich Castle, and walk down the hill towards the village. At the bottom of the hill, turn left towards Welsh Bicknor and Courtfield. It is not long before the gentle climb affords good views of the large Herne Bridge on your left and the village of Goodrich on your right. On reaching a triangular patch of grass, turn right along a quiet country lane and, keeping left, follow the road past a little cottage named Bearwood.

Climb over the stile at the bottom of the hill, and you are in the lush green water meadows that lie alongside the river Wye. Go down to the water's edge and turn right so that you are walking downstream. Looking across the river end straight up, there is a steep rock where a pair of peregrine falcons successfully raised their young this year. The peregrine's dramatic diving stoops can exceed 125mph.

Take the north-western gate out of the churchyard, walk up the track and turn right at the top. Turn left at an old farm building into the field ahead; don't follow the footpath sign. Follow the muddy track right and aim for the avenue of lime trees in the distance. Once a pleasant drive to Goodrich Court, this is now a picturesque campsite with one permanent resident, who lives in a much loved gypsy caravan. Walk up the avenue, turning right at the road – which takes you into the village past the old jail and The Hostellerie hotel. A little further down the lane is Jolly's, the village shop and post office, where jars of barley sugar and humbugs adorn the shelves.

The gradual climb takes you around the edge of Coppet Hill. To the west the little village of Goodrich is easily visible, with its neatly walled churchyard. 14th-century church and impressive rectory.

When the river is not full of canoeists testing their strength against the flow, you may be lucky enough to see an otter or a kingfisher. You will certainly see and hear the ducks and swans that enjoy the river.

A little farther down the road turn left up Castle Lane, through the car park and on to Goodrich Castle. This red sandstone ruin is as rugged as the rocks it stands on. Goodrich Castle has it all: a forbidding 12th-century keep, steep spiral stairs, murder holes, dungeons, a massive Norman tower, an elegant chapel and a broad, grassy moat.

The little path cuts through the thick covering of hawthorn and gorse. Much of the walk is laid out in the valley below. You can see the great loop of the river emerging from Symonds Yat and meandering across the plain. From here the patchwork of fields and hedgerows stretches to the mountains in the distance.

This stretch of river is lined with mature willow and alder trees. The rich pasture is grazed by sheep and cows, and the odd heron can be seen flying across the water meadow. The footpath takes you through a gate and a beech wood before re-emerging in the meadow and coming to an end. If you look up towards Coppet Hill, you will see the image of a white fox painted on the rock above.

Lengths: about seven miles of easy walking, with gentle climbs and descents.

The path eventually reaches a little wood of ash and oak. Turn right and follow the gentle descent to the river. At this point you should be able to see the three counties of Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Monmouthshire. To the east is the Forest of Dean, whose massive oak trees were originally grown for making ships in the 18th century. You will see the old coal-mining villages of the forest: Ruarclean, Lydbrook and Drybrook. To the south west is Symonds Yat, with its backdrop of woodland and dramatic rocky outcrops that have challenged many a climber.

Walk towards the right-hand corner of the field, where a lovely old walnut tree stands before a castellated farm house. Follow the footpath through the farmyard and past paddocks of Arabian horses and miniature Shetland ponies. When you reach the busy road turn right, and after about 200 yards cross the road. Go through the kissing-gate and walk across the fields, following the marked path over a stile, through a gate and along a dark lane to Goodrich. Turning left at the road you will come to the black-and-white-timbered former courthouse. Turn right and follow signs to the

Goodrich Castle (01345 125436), is five miles from Ross on Wye off the A40. Car park open 10am-6pm daily. Castle open 1 Nov-31 March, Wednesday-Sunday, 10am-4pm. Closed Dec 24-25. Admission: adults £2.30, concessions £1.70, children £1.20.

Map: Ordnance Survey Landranger 162 (1:50,000).

Two wheels good, one wheel better? Minimalism takes to the road

Unicycling is the Everest of the wheeled world. It's hard, and you do it because it's there. It's pointless to ask what the point is. There is none.

If you're not in a circus, riding one is just a cry for attention; if you are in a circus, you're signalling that you want more attention than anyone else, writes Eric Kendall.

Advocates of the unicycle praise its hidden qualities. It shares with the 2CV the

would be nearer the mark. Back in the mists of time, a strange unicyclist made a list of things that would be fiendishly difficult for anyone to do on one wheel: vigorous arm movement (preferably with a long stick in one hand, to upset balance), periodically connecting with a rapidly moving hard object (might as well make it a ball), lots of unpredictably wobbling obstacles to negotiate (perhaps in the form of other unicyclists), and a couple of goal-shaped nets on which to snag your pedals (could also serve as a target into which to knock the ball). The really odd thing is that he found anyone to join him.

But he did, and the rest is history, albeit on a very small scale – at least in the UK. It's an amazing sight – a combination of extreme skill, stop-start twisting movements, blurs of legs and wheels, and a spirit that underlines just how hard it is. The achievement is to have taken part, not in some woolly-liberal, brotherhood-of-man kind of way, but literally.

Strangely big in Germany, unicycling is inherently humorous, at least as seen from the sidelines. Riding one, or learning to, is funny in the sense that you may as well laugh rather than cry. It helps

that other foot is on the deck, you're safe. Now, brace yourself and stand down on the pedal, which pushes the unicycle miraculously towards the vertical and will spit you out over the top if you're not very careful. If you start with the pedal in the wrong position, cocked away from you, you bypass this stage completely, going directly to flat on your back in one smooth move.

And that's almost all there is to it. In no time at all you'll be demonstrating the sport's greatest misnomer, the "stable position" (pedals horizontal), before moving on to straight lines, stopping, turning (extra pressure on one pedal) and even the "free-mount" (no walls) – at which point you've cracked it. Finally, for the utter nutter, there's the "suicide-mount", definitely in the advanced category, and a sure sign that you're ready, at least psychologically, for the hockey pitch.

Where and what to ride
Lots of hire shops have one unicycle in stock and no idea of how to ride it, but they usually know someone who can. Be deeply suspicious of offers of help from a keen unicyclist – they're probably recruiting for their unicycle hockey team.

A few people find them easy to ride and learn instantly, others don't – it can take weeks. Unicycles cost from around £80 up to £200 or more for a model designed for hockey – they're stronger all round, and have more spokes in the wheels. Try DM Engineering (01202 471 943). No good for hockey, or to learn on, a popular "giraffe" model is adjustable between 5ft and 8ft, and makes you stand out from the crowd.

Unicycle hockey teams and circus schools are the most organised areas of unicycling. Contact Oddballs (0171-250 1333), a specialist juggling shop, or circus schools: Circus Space (0171-613 4141), or Albert & Friends Instant Circus (0181-741 5471). The Catch (01275 332 655) is a juggling/street theatre/new circus magazine that carries listings including unicycling. Main contact for the Hackney Hockey Cokeys is James (0171-729 5013); other hockey teams include the London Loonies, the Hastings Unicycle Group (Hug) and the St Leonard's Unicycle Group (Slug). Rumour has it that someone in Birmingham is trying to start a team.

There is also a world unicycle convention – and, of course, leaping on to the handwagon and balancing up hill and down dale, there are even mountain unicyclists with knobby tyres.



In the balance: unicycle hockey

Photograph: Eric Kendall

ability to harm innocent bystanders or the rider, by dint of going so slowly. And let's jump-jet, it's so hard to operate that you must be brilliant and highly trained to be riding one at all.

Some claim that as a practical proposition round town, a unicycle beats in-line skates because you're only a loony while you're on it. Back on your feet, nobody need know – you don't have to wear own's shoes to ride one. You can carry a unicycle easily in one hand, park it in the corner of a room, pop it into the luggage rack of a train or bus. So with all this going for it, why do people choose to play unicycle hockey instead?

Well that's what they call it, hut polo

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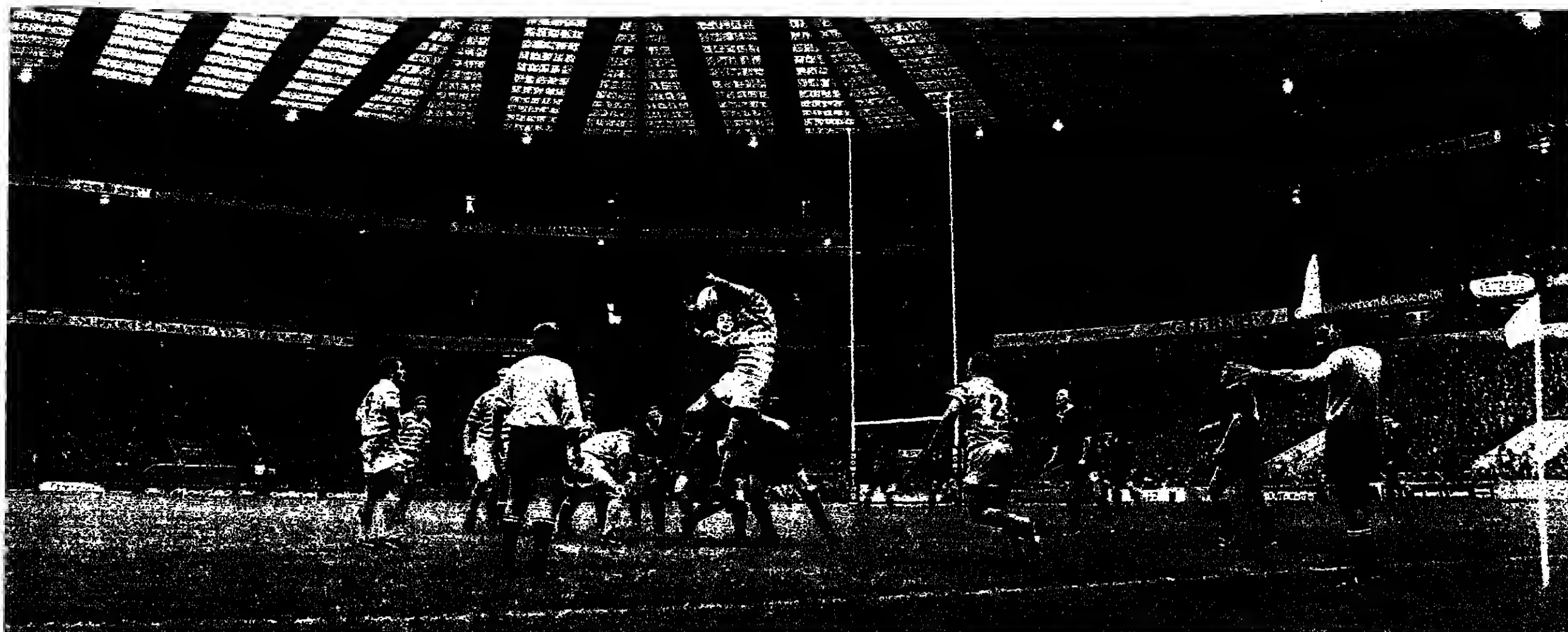
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When fans have more bottle than the teams

Cliff Brittle's campaign to turn wine back into water by re-imposing amateurism on nine-tenths of English rugby will no doubt find considerable support among the Varsity Match faithful. Many of the 70,000 or so who flocked to Twickenham for Tuesday's student showpiece spend their working lives in the City handling money in vast quantities, so the last thing they need is to see their annual winter booze-up disfigured by a dash for cash around the dreaming spires.

If one time-honoured tradition bit the December mud this week - the Rugby Football Union's insistence on neutral touch judges meant there was no room for last season's captains in their badged and blazered finery - many other Varsity shibboleths appeared in the rudest of health. The car parks were

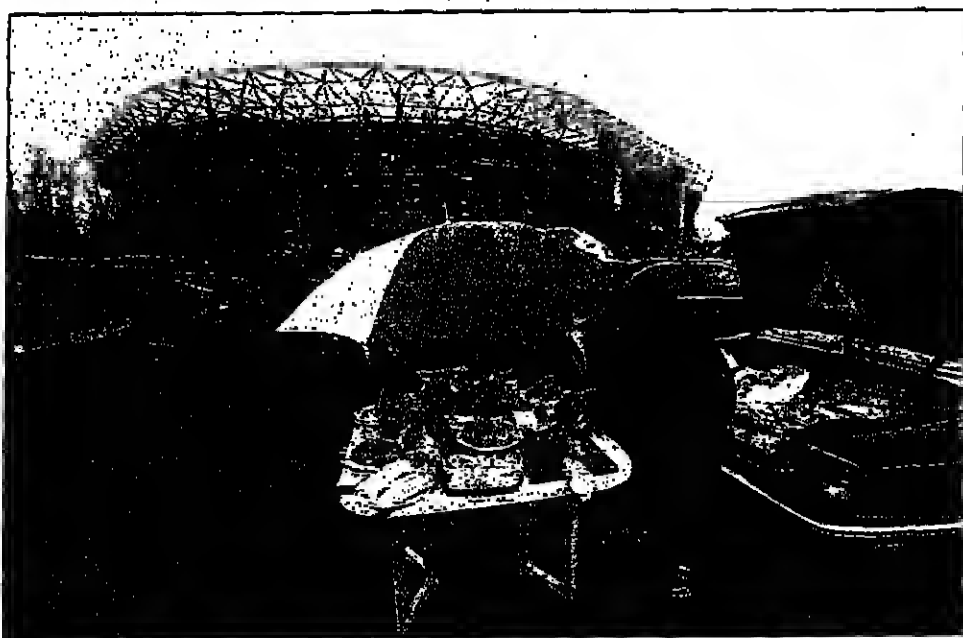
smothered in smoked salmon and awash with half-decent claret, the enthusiasm in the stands was warm and infectious in a sozzled sort of way and the rugby itself was fierce, frantic and flawed.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID ASHDOWN

Some of the, how shall we say, colonial contingent did not play the old game in quite the proper manner; Paul Surridge and Andrew Craig, two outstanding Light Blues from All Black country, were clearly of the opinion that the tak-

ing part mattered rather less than the winning and there was even an ungentelemanly front-row bust-up between an American and a New Zealander in the closing minutes. Brian Campsall, the referee, was forced to take the combatants aside for a quiet lecture, no doubt along the lines of: "I say you chaps, cut it out or else." It may be that the Cambridge-supporting streaker who brought the second half to an amused standstill was making some sort of symbolic point about a grand occasion being stripped bare of its long-established custom and practice. Or maybe she was fortified by the wine consumed before kick-off. Whatever, she deserved her standing ovation. Everyone gets an ovation in the Varsity Match.

-Chris Hewett



Copies of these photographs - and any others by the Independent's sports photographers David Ashdown, Peter Jay and Robert Hallam - can be ordered by telephoning 0171-293 2534



Hibernating clubs given wake-up call by advance ticket sales

The Allied Dunbar Premiership returns from suspended animation this afternoon to face an immediate health check. Can professional club rugby take advantage of the England Test team's high-profile heroics and establish itself as a sound commercial proposition, or is the whole ambitious venture no more than a gargantuan slice of pie in the sky? Chris Hewett reports.

Welcome to rugby's Christmas pantomime, which this year boasts an all-star cast including Cliff Brittle as a particularly reactionary wicked witch, Fran Cotton and Bill Beaumont as two provincially minded ugly sisters and the entire rank and file of the Allied Dunbar Premiership as an impoverished Cinderella with ideas far above her station. According to Brittle's version of the script, she will be the first Cinderella in history to go from riches to rags.

The first act was performed on Thursday, when the much-maligned chairman of the Rugby Football Union's management board issued his controversial blueprint for the future of the English game: a pronouncement that struck many clubs as a peculiar cross between a Papal Bull and an Alan Partridge diatribe. Today's second act, in which Cinderella finally gets to the ball after four interminable weeks spent locked in the broom cupboard, is deadly serious. Will club rugby successfully ride the Hawaiian-sized wave generated

by last weekend's wondrous England-New Zealand contest at Twickenham, or will it be a morale-sapping case of *After the Lord Mayor's Show*?

If advance ticket sales for this afternoon's London derby between Harlequins and Wasps at The Stoop are a reliable guide, the clubs are back in business in a big way. "We've sold more than 5,000 seats and if the weather behaves itself, we'll be close to an 8,000 capacity crowd," Donald Kerr, Quins' acting chief executive, said yesterday. "I can't remember a League or Premiership match that has generated such strong initial interest here. Before professionalism, we'd have been lucky to pull in 4,000 for a Wasps fixture and the upturn tells us that the potential audience for club rugby these days is higher, indeed, than some people seem to think."

Only three months ago, the boot was very much on the other foot. The Heineken Cup match between Quins and Bourgoin, the crack French side who won last season's European Conference competition, might just as well have been played on the moon for all the support it attracted. The hospitality suites were full and the press box packed, but the paying public decided that 13 September was hair-washing afternoon. All in all, it was a bad moment for rugby's new-age financiers.

Yet this weekend's Premiership programme promises to be the best-attended of the season, thanks in part to the dramatic content of England's month-long tussle with the heavyweights of the southern hemisphere but also to a genuine hunger for top-level club action. Leicester will pull in 10,000 plus for this afternoon's game with Sale, Newcastle ex-

pect a full house at Kingston Park for tomorrow's meeting with Gloucester and Saracens predict an audience of around 8,000 for the visit of Bath.

During the recent exercise in mid-winter hibernation, the body charged with administering the professional club game, the English Rugby Partnership, worked closely with Allied Dunbar's marketing and research wing in an effort to identify the potential audience for their combined product. "The figures show that almost 50 per cent of males between 16 and 40 have an interest in the top end of the game and we see that as a highly encouraging statistic," said Kerr, who chairs ERP.

"The issue centres on the structured season. If we can create a fixture list under which the clubs have a meaningful home game once a fortnight, there is a chance of commercial viability. It is through regular exposure that people begin to identify with their local club, which in turn translates into regular support."

"We've just had four weeks on the sidelines at Quins and I can't say it hasn't been difficult. We played one or two second-team games on the mornings of international matches and there was some interest, but we were effectively shut down for a month and it hurt us. People spend money at this time of year, but because we had little or no rugby to offer, no one was spending any of it here. Obviously, we need to forge some sort of common agreement on international dates to enable clubs to keep operating."

Representatives of the Allied Dunbar clubs are pushing for a maximum of two pre-Christmas England internationals from now on, although they would almost certainly be prepared to settle for a compromise figure of three. What they require urgently is an end to disruptive one-off Tests like next weekend's Italy-Ireland match, which will deprive Quins, for instance, of two senior front-row forwards for their trip to Leicester.

Quite who Quins will field at the sharp end this afternoon was still under wraps yesterday; the only certainty was that there would be no room for Will Carling (remember him?). Wasps, however, were prepared to divulge their line-up. Alex King has declared himself fit for action after a 20-minute run-out with the second-string in mid-week. Laurence Scrase replaces the injured Nick Greenstock in midfield and the flanker Jon Jones makes his Premiership debut on the open side.



Andy Long, the Bath hooker, is determined to press his claims for a recall to the England team when his side play Saracens tomorrow

Sarries forecast a Grau day

Saracens face a severe test of their Premiership credentials tomorrow when Bath visit Vicarage Road for the most intriguing contest of the campaign so far, Chris Hewett refines the prospect of a must-win game for both sides.

Take one heavy-duty Argentinian prop making a lucrative debut appearance on the Saracens gravy train, throw in a thoroughly fed-up Bath hooker with a reputation to restore and you have the makings of a torrid afternoon shift at the coalface of Premiership rugby. Tomorrow's meeting between Saracens, unbeaten at the top of the table, and Bath, flirting dangerously with mid-table anonymity after two defeats in five outings, may well prove a little lacking in the Christmas cheer department.

Sarries consider Roberto Grau, the Puma who caused so

much disruption to the England set-piece at Twickenham a year ago, to be the missing piece in a title-challenging jigsaw. The Londoners have been seeking a genuinely destructive scrummager for some time: they thought they had it cracked when Tony Daly, the World Cup-winning Wallaby from Sydney, pitched up in north London last season, but were sadly mistaken - Daly was past it long before he pulled on a Sarries shirt - and they then found themselves priced out of the running for Garry Pagel, the South African strongman.

Everything comes to those who wait, however. Mark Evans, the club's director of rugby, believes Grau to be the Real McCoy and is even more impressed by the fact that his asking price was nowhere near that of Pagel. "We've never considered ourselves to be heavy scrummagers but it will be very interesting to see what we can do with Roberto in there," he said.

Grau will not be of much interest to the England hierarchy,

of course, but the national selectors will be fascinated by Andy Long's reaction to the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. Dropped by England after spending a dodgy half in reverse gear against Australia last month, the rookie from the south coast slipped so quickly down the rankings that the only All Blacks he came across were of the under-21 variety.

Bath have not lost faith in him, though. He keeps Mark Regan, desperately unlikely not to regain his Test place against New Zealand, out of the side, saying: "I want to go out and show Clive that I've got a firm case for playing international rugby again. I was deeply disappointed to have been given just 40 minutes so this game could not have come at a better time."

Tim Rodber returns to lead Northampton at London Irish this afternoon while Duncan Bell, a former England under-18 prop, makes his Premiership debut for Sale at Leicester following his £50,000 transfer from Ebbw Vale.

WHITBREAD ROUND THE WORLD RACE

Weather eyes open as we leave the bad ju-ju behind

The third leg of the Whitbread Round the World Race, from Fremantle to Sydney, starts today. Merit Cup's skipper needs to engineer a recovery after a disappointing second leg left his boat in fifth place overall, but he still has faith in his crew and his strategy.

lot different from the previous two.

The options are fewer, the length is shorter, and once again the theory is that the fleet will be more bunched. Sooner or later that prediction has to come true. So there will be plenty of pressure and tension out there with the extra pressure on us being the need to hang in good result. In a way we are over the last one, but we won't really be over it until we are in Sydney with the target of a top three place achieved.

We are also aware that part of our hurt was based on old-fashioned feelings about the amount of time we were behind the winners. If we had been seventh by seven minutes instead of seven days we would still have scored the same points and it is points that decide the overall winner of this Whitbread/Volvoo Race.

There came a point when we were so far behind that the race for us was over for that leg, and we sailed very conservatively for the rest of the time. This time the conditions are likely to be such that those behind will always have the chance to catch up, and those

ahead will have to concentrate like mad to protect their lead. The general expectation is for a nine, maybe eight-day leg. We're taking enough food for 10 and are geared up to scrap every inch of the way.

One job I have not had to do is rebuild the crew in any way. They are far more relaxed than me and in Kevin Shoebridge I have a watch captain, boat-builder and sailmaker who would still be smiling and telling people to take things easy at the last trump.

But we know we have a lot of people in Britain, Italy and New Zealand who are looking for a big result this time and, of course, next. So this is when the structure of that team should be really valuable. Not as a collection of rock star individuals, but as a group of guys who can play really effectively for each other. And for their harassed skipper.



GRANT DALTON

This has been a difficult stopover. Not because we had too much to do. More because we came through the last leg with very little damage and we have had too much time waiting impatiently to get underway again to erase the disappointment of being seventh on the last leg.

When you have taken a

knock-down the

natural thing is to

get up and start

fighting again. But

we have had to

wait for two frustrating

weeks before we can throw

a punch again. A

mandatory eight

count is had

enough. Fourteen

days has been

bloody awful.

Navigator Mike

Quilter and I have analysed

the strategies for the next leg

over and over again as the boys

have made good the little

damage we suffered on the

way over from Cape Town. But

it is this morning, as we leave

Fremantle Sailing Club for the

start line, that we can square

up again to the game.

Twice before the Whit-

bread run into Fremantle has

been bad ju-ju and when I was

here in 1986/7 with the New

Zealand America's Cup team

I was one of the tune-up

crew. Fremantle is a great

place and I can't wait to be

away from it.

We have resisted the

knee-jerk urge to make

changes just because we had

one bad result. We have con-

fidence in the boat, the sails,

and the crew. So why change

everything? All the crews

have been concentrating on

weather and the choice of

sails for a leg which will be a

HOCKEY

No Luckes for East Grinstead

Cannock went into the mid-season break last Christmas with a four-point lead, yet failed to win the Premier title. As they currently lead the Premier table, four points ahead of East Grinstead, they will go into the break in the lead again this year, whatever the result of tomorrow's game against Old Loughtonians.

The Sussex side, who make the short trip to Camberbury, will be without their Olympic goalkeeper David Luckes, who had a knee operation earlier this week. Luckes, who was in brilliant form last weekend, will be replaced by James Westwood, who could be in for a busy afternoon.

Canterbury, currently in third place with Dave Hackett back in the centre of their midfield, have looked promising recently, and with their England Under-21 strikers, David Mathews and Stuart Humphries, scoring regularly, they look strong championship contenders.

SNOOKER

McKenzie issues writ

Jim McKenzie, sacked last month as chief executive of the sport's governing body, the World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association, has issued a writ against the organisation for breach of contract.

He has written to WPBSA members denying allegations reported to have been made against him in a letter to the

rank and file by the chairman, Rex Williams. McKenzie also made claims about the WPBSA, and the sport as a whole, are going wrong. "I believe that if properly promoted, marketed, televised and organised there is an extremely bright future for snooker," he said. "If these things are not done, the prospects are bleak indeed."

Antipodean referees for England

Two of England's Five Nations' Championship matches this season will be controlled by referees from the southern hemisphere.

The New Zealander, Colin Hawke, has been awarded the Twickenham match against Wales on 21 February, while the Australian, Peter Marshall, takes charge when England entertain Ireland six weeks later.

The England captain, Lawrence Dallaglio, has won the November Allied Dunbar/Rugby World player of the month award, days after being named as the Rugby Writers' Club personality of the year.

Crispin Cormack, 27, who helped Pontypridd to the Welsh National League title last season, has joined Cross Keys. The full-back, who toured Australia with Wales in 1996, is the third player to join the club this week after the arrival of the Newport centre Steve Reed and the American prop Marcus Maggard.

1996 FIVE NATIONS REFEREE APPOINTMENTS: France v England (A. Marshall), Ireland v Scotland (A. Marshall), Wales v France (C. Marshall), Wales v Scotland (C. Marshall), Wales v Ireland (C. Marshall), Wales v England (C. Marshall), Wales v France (C. Marshall), Wales v Scotland (C. Marshall), Wales v Ireland (C. Marshall), Wales v England (C. Marshall).

— Andrew Baldock

WINTER OLYMPICS

Moon chosen to carry torch

A British anti-landmine activist, two world-class runners and three Olympic Nordic combined champions will be the final torch runners at the opening of the Nagano Olympic Winter Games in February.

Mine activist Chris Moon and the Japanese women runners, Hiromi Suzuki and Masako Chiba, will be among the torchbearers, along with Takanori Kono, Masashi Abe and Reiichi Mikata - all gold-medal winners for Japan in the Olympic Nordic combined team event. Midori Ito, the former Olympic figure skating medalist, will light the cauldron.

The inclusion of the two long-distance runners will act as a "bridge between the Nagano Games and the Sydney summer Olympics," a spokesman said.

A former British Army officer, Moon lost a leg and an arm while defusing landmines in Mozambique in 1995. He will join the opening ceremony with the use of leg and hand prosthetics.

After the Olympic flame is lit in Greece on 19 December, the torch will travel through all of Japan's 47 prefectures from 6 January to 7 February. About 1,200 runners are involved in the month-long nationwide torch relay.

— Ted Heaney

WEEKEND FIXTURE GUIDE

TODAY

3.0 unless stated

Major football fixtures: page 22

Championship v Manchester

Partnership v Wolves

Gateshead v Stevenage

Harrogate v Huddersfield

Kettering v Welling

Leek v Macclesfield

Leeds v Southport

Rushden v Dover

Slough v Kidderminster

Stalybridge v Belper

Woking v Hayes

FA CARLSBERG VASE Third round:

Manx v Bournemouth; Blackpool v

Barnstaple; Macclesfield v Belper;

Walsby v Kidderminster; Tow Law v

Dunston; Stalybridge v Belper; Belper v

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Four-legged greats and hunting the real McCoy

You don't survive on *The Sun* for almost 30 years without being a cute cookie, and the current bun's racing correspondent, Claude Duval, remains one of the wildest, and most feared, members of the press room. When Claude asks you to assess one of his books, your heels instinctively go together and there is a natural tendency to elevate the tome to the top of any review. Which brings us to *The Real McCoy* (Hodder & Stoughton £16.99).

The full title is the giveaway here as the sub-headline "My Life So Far" appears on the cover of the biography of champion jockey Tony McCoy. The Irishman was only 22 when he landed his Cheltenham Festival big-race double earlier this year and there will surely be further chapters to come in his sporting life.

McCoy's book (sorry, Claude's book) is interesting nevertheless as we see the backcloth that has produced the hungriest contemporary National Hunt jockey. Indeed, you seldom get to read much about A P McCoy's thoughts anywhere else, as he is contracted largely to *The Sun* and has other agents demanding money for his opinions.

McCoy's first-person text is punctuated by others who appear in his life-play, and there are also passages from the co-writer. Whether the latter are needed is debatable, as for those of us who have fallen into Claude's company, there seems to be as much C Duval about some of the jockey's reminiscences as A P McCoy himself.

Marcus Armytage, another of my colleagues, may also have had some input into Richard Dunwoody's thoughts for *Hands & Hoofs* (Partridge Press £20). These two denizens of the weighing room have collaborated in print before, but may never do so again. It appears Armytage is finding it increasingly difficult to persuade the taciturn Dunwoody to offer any coherent thoughts.

This may, then, be their last venture, and an expensive one to follow at £20. It concerns the best horses Dunwoody has come across in his enduring and successful career, not only the ones he himself has partnered exclusively, but also animals who achieved their greatest feats either before or after he was allowed on their backs.

Perhaps the most interesting chapter is on the unfortunate Rushing Wild, whose pelvis fell apart as he was leading in the 1993 Irish National. "I include him because, although his career was tragically short-lived, he was one of

the greatest chasers I have ever ridden," Dunwoody says.

Yet another inhabitant of Britain's press room, Derek Thompson, has a go with *Tommo's Year* (Bostree £14.99). I must admit I like Tommo because he sometimes lets me sit in his chair and refers to me either as big fella or matey because he hasn't got a blind clue who I am. The great thing about the man is that all that Widow Twankey stuff he does on television is not put on. He is actually exactly like that in real life.

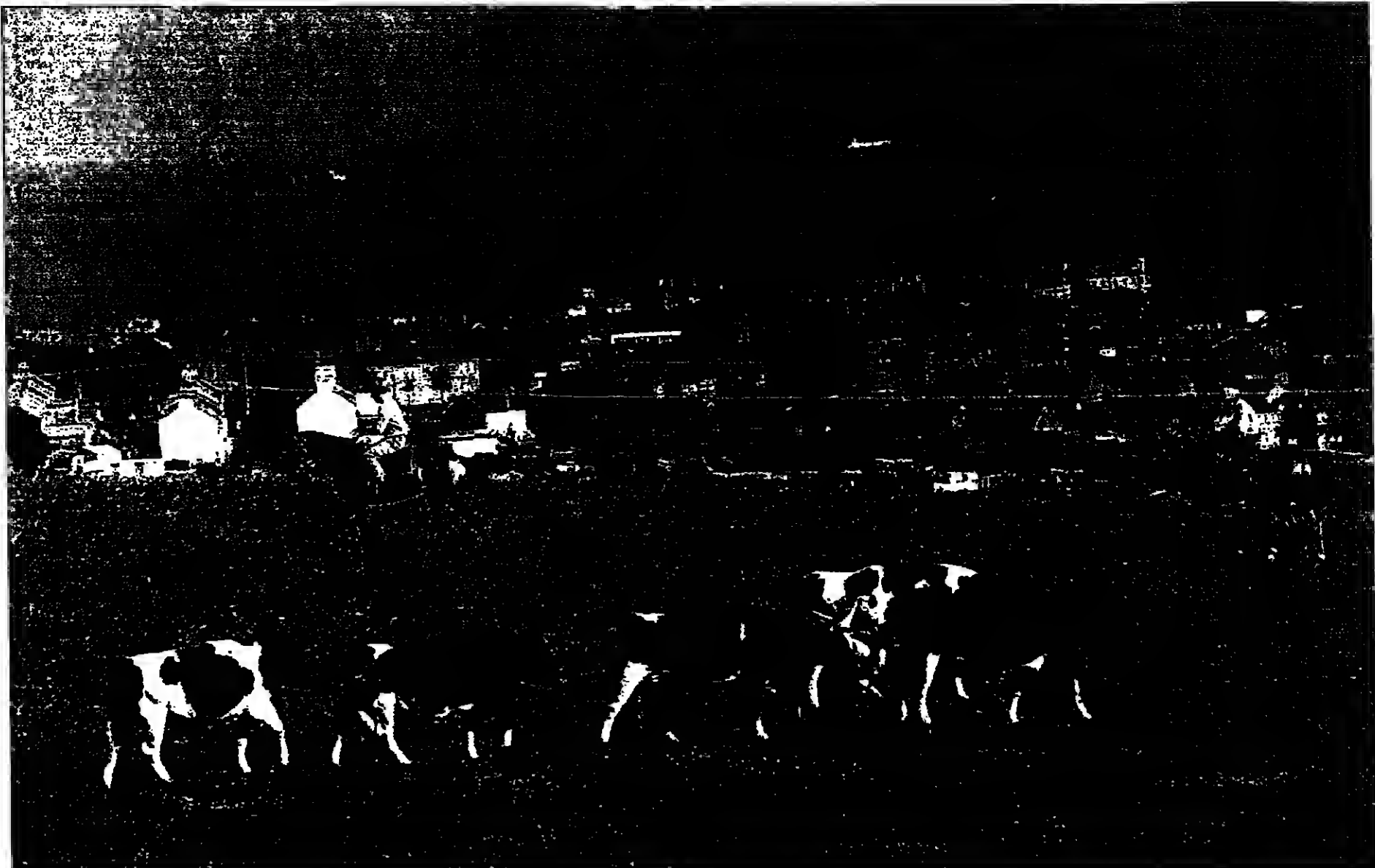
Much as I adore Tommo it was an astonishing moment when I heard he was writing a book, rather like the time as a child when you see a circus elephant balancing on a beach ball for the first time. But he's done it all right and if you want to find out who Tommo's mates are (Walter Swinburn, Frankie Dettori, Jack Charlton to name but a few), where he stays for the races and why Dubai is heaven on earth this book is a must. Ideal for children's stocking-fillers.

To Win Just Once (Headline £16.99) investigates life away from the cameras and bright lights as it details the life of a journeyman jumps jockey. Guy Lewis faces all the harriers of the weighing room proletariat: the long, fruitless journeys; lack of money and frustration.

But no obstacle could be greater than the layout of his own book. Clashing typefaces and formats, a splashing of asterisks and other digits make progress a struggle. This is a shame as we constantly need to be reminded that for every winner, there are the tiers and tears of the losers.

Then there are two works on Irish themes. *Danoli, the People's Champion* (Robson Books £16.95) details the life of, perhaps, the most charismatic horse alive today. Following serious injury the gelding may never return to the station he once occupied, but don't tell that to his trainer, Tom Foley. Any book containing the thoughts of this humble and helpful man must be worth a look.

Champion Charlie (Mainstream Publishing £14.99) is not a rushed job following Sunnyside's victory in the Hennessy Gold Cup, rather Michael Clower's detailed observation of the perennial jumps jockey champion of Ireland. Charlie Swann is the Irish son of an Englishman and Clower himself is a classic British gentleman turning green after 25 years over the Irish Sea. In layout and research this book is much more reminiscent of Clower's earlier work on Michael Kinane. It's also just as good.



Trevor Jones and George Selwyn, two of Britain's foremost racing photographers, have collaborated to produce *'The Spirit of Racing'* (Kensington West Productions, £16.99), a delightful collection of photographs from the sport of kings. The book features pictures from all around the world and captures the great beauty of this most photogenic of sports. Photographs Above: Town meets country and the coast at Mary Revere's Salterns gallops on England's north-east coast. Below left: Remittance Man, one of the fastest chasers of recent years, with his travelling companion, Nobby the sheep. Below right: A foal at Dalham Hall Stud



The legend of Sampras remains under construction

One day, probably when he is retired, enjoying his millions and well past caring what people think, fond memories of Pete Sampras' superlative tennis may finally eclipse a somewhat negative response to much of his career.

Jimmy Connors and John McEnroe achieved such an incredible pitch of high performance with low behaviour that it was never going to be easy for the players who followed them, particularly Americans. Sampras has tended to suffer by comparison for being good without being bad.

Herb Branham's unauthorised biography, *Sampras: A Legend in the Works*, is a timely reminder why his fellow resident of Tampa, Florida, was recently voted by his peers as the No 1 player in the 25 years since the inauguration of the Association of Tennis Professionals, which became the ATP Tour.

The book's title is apt. The

26-year-old Sampras' legend remains under construction as he continues the quest for honours, especially Grand Slam singles championships. Sampras has won 10, two fewer than the record held by Australia's Roy Emerson. Sampras, moreover, has yet to win the French Open, the only one of the four classics played on red clay.

Branham's research would hardly be complete without a word from Rod Laver, one of Sampras' idols and the only man to accomplish the Grand Slam twice. According to the great Australian left-hander, Sampras' prospects of winning on the Paris clay might increase if he took a bit off his serve, went after his returns a little more and got to the net more than ever. Laver added that Sampras' occasional lapses had no place in the clay-court mentality and noted an improved steadiness.

Sampras' success has been accompanied by grief in recent

years – the death of his coach, Tim Gullikson, from brain cancer took an emotional toll on the Wimbledon champion. The author also touches on reports that Sampras suffers from a mild form of anaemia.

The player's sister, Stella, who coached the women's tennis team at UCLA, "says that

he also had the disease and stressed that it was no big deal and that it played no part in her brother's conditioning shortcomings." Sampras has publicly denied that he has the affliction.

"Sampras' vanilla personality didn't make for good copy," Branham observes during one passage. The author does his best to contradict the point.

If the success of the Honda Challenge ATP Senior Tour event featuring Bjorn Borg and John McEnroe at the Royal Albert Hall represents the first ripples of a wave of nostalgia, *A Handful of Summers* will certainly go with the flow. Gordon Forbes' classic account of life on the tour before the advent of

Open tennis is guaranteed to warm a winter's night. There is also Forbes' sequel, *Too Soon to Panic*, for readers game enough to have their sides split twice.

The trousers and skirts are longer still in Max Robertson's *The Ballad of Worple Road*, a history in verse of the original All England Club grounds (1877-1921). Robertson, the BBC's Voice of Wimbledon for more than 40 years, has also recorded

a reading on tape as a companion to the book.

Medieval Europe and modern Grand Slams figure in *A Little History of Tennis*, by John Crace, the neatest way to put the sport in your pocket without becoming an agent.

Wimbledon '97, wet and wonderful, is captured in words and photographs in the official annual, text by John Parsons and photography by the Allsport team of Clive Brunsell, Gary M Prior and Stu Forster. *The 1997 Wimbledon Compendium*, by Alan Little, is a must for those who like to dip into virtually every aspect concerning the world's most prestigious tournament.

The US Open – Game, Set, Unmatched, is a handsome pictorial history of the United States Championships with text by Roger M Williams. Not seen in this country yet, it is published by Time Life Books and might be available through Sports

Pages (0171 240 9604 or 0161 832 8530).

ITF World of Tennis, edited by John Barrett, remains the most comprehensive annual covering the international scene. Those who teach the game, or wish to learn to play, or are keen to improve their technique and enjoyment of the sport are recommended *The Way to Play*, by Leif Dahlgren, development administrator for the International Tennis Federation and the former director of education for the Swedish Tennis Association.

Sampras – A Legend in the Works by H A Branham (Robson Books, £14.99); *A Handful of Summers* by Gordon Forbes (Harper Collins, £12.99); *Too Soon to Panic* by Gordon Forbes (Harper Collins, £12.99); *A Little History of Tennis* by John Crace (Apples Press, £6.99); *The Official Wimbledon Annual 1997* by John Parsons (Russeton Publishing, £20); *1997 Wimbledon Compendium* by Alan Little (The All England Lawn Tennis Club, £7.99); *The US Open, Game, Set, Unmatched* by Roger M Williams (Time Life Books, £22.99); *The Sports Pages*, 0771 940 9004; *ITF World of Tennis* edited by John Barrett (Collins & Brown, £3.99); *The Way to Play* by Leif Dahlgren (Horse & Press, £22.99)

Every question was a springboard for some bizarre autobiographical ramble



CHRIS MAUME

SPORT ON TV

Lester Piggott refused repeatedly to have anything to do with *Secret Lives* (C4), a documentary devoted to digging up all the dirt on him that was fit to transmit. Finally he agreed – as long as he was paid what the programme called "a small fortune."

This was the film's pay-off, the intended twist in the tale, the final, telling example of a sporting hero's venality. Except that to my mind it seemed a reasonable request – you trash me, you pay me.

Sportsmen hardly need to have perfect private lives to win the hearts of nations (sports-women probably do, but that's another story), so it's not at all paradoxical that Piggott should still merit the epithet "much-loved", despite his spell in chaise and being stripped of the Queen's hauberk.

Secret Lives called him "Britain's greatest sportsman", which is slightly debatable. But they had to put him on his high

horse in order to knock him off – which they did with a remorselessness that, if the programme was anything to go by, was worthy of the Long Fellow himself.

The picture was of a compulsive skint, womaniser, ligger supreme and all-purpose sponger. Worse, a mistreater of horses, and a ruthless jockey, on the track and away from it. And even worse than that.

His former chauffeur, Michael Hinchcliffe, told a story from 1976 when the driver of another car took exception to something Hinchcliffe did and began to berate Piggott, who ordered Hinchcliffe to drive off at speed. Unfortunately, the man's arm was caught in the car window, and he was dragged along then thrown clear.

"I think he's dead," Hinchcliffe said. "Serves him right," Piggott replied.

There was a heady scent of scores being settled. "He is sick

with money and general meanness," said "The Scout" – Ross Benson, formerly of the *Daily Express*. "He can't help himself. It's compulsive, like a child or an animal."

Benson, owner Robert Sangster, Lloyd's syndicate partner Ian Prosser, erstwhile rival Willie Carson, trainer Luca Cumani, they all queued up to have a go, and few of them were able to pass up the opportunity of imitating his nasal, hard-of-hearing diction.

Which was what my favourite anecdote centred on. During the Cumani letter affair, his friend, Charles St George, and "The Scout" went round Fleet Street, trying to impose their own D-notice. Privilege gathered its skirts around it as the race-loving newspaper magnates sealed their lips – apart from *People* owner Robert Maxwell, who, according to Brian Radford, the journalist covering the case, was

bouncing up and down in his leather chair in glee.

Piggott rang Radford, pretending to be a Customs and Excise officer, to find out how much he had to fear. Unsurprisingly, Radford wasn't fooled, and played him along, saying, "We've got enough on this fellow to put him away for 20 years." Finally, he could stifle the giggles no longer and said, "Lester, what are you playing at?"

"How did you know it was me?" Piggott asked. Sometimes it was hard not to laugh, for all his small-mindedness. I liked the story of how he pinched another jockey's whip, mid-race at Deauville, and another tale it was hard not to relish was how he was nabbed by the Inland Revenue.

Having come to a hard-fought agreement to disclose everything and stump up a huge wedge, he wrote out a cheque. Except that he was drawing on an account he

hadn't declared. Do not pass go. Do not collect £200.

One fact *Secret Lives* missed out on was the fact that Piggott had his prison sentence lengthened by a week for smuggling in phonocards. This emerged in *They Think It's All Over* (BBC1), which was otherwise devoted to one man. The programme's purpose, it became clear from the first question, was to allow Chris Eubank to make a complete dickhead of himself.

In the past, when Brighton's so-called Beau Brummel (crazy cane, crazy guy) has appeared on programmes for a which a sense of humour is recommended, he has been found wanting, completely unable, for example, to see the joke about *Mrs Menon* – that the joke's on him. But he has done so many of them now, he's finally realised that, similar to the apparently contractual tantrums required of John McEnroe in seniors'

tennis, Eubank is on to come over as an egotistical wally and give his fellow participants, and the audience, a good laugh at his expense. Much like his boxing career, really.

With that Mike Leigh-style absence of self-consciousness, he takes himself risibly seriously, and every question was a springboard for some bizarre autobiographical ramble – "Have I been sacked and nobody's told me?" said Nick Hancock during one excursion through Eubank's past life.

"Do you need a visa to enter your world?" Hancock said at one point. And Lee Hirst was not one to let a spot of piss-taking go by without joining in. Eubank said, apropos of nothing remotely relevant, "I traced rats as a child – [derisive audience laughter] – this is educational – rats can only live 15 years –" "So you can never shag 'em then, can you?" interjected Hirst.

I have been critical in the past about *They Think It's All Over*'s easy recourse to scatological, but there was a lovely moment as Randy the horse, one of the mystery guests in the touchy-feely round, was led off stage by its showjumping rider, Michael Whitaker. Rory McGrath referred to the hard-to-miss equine penis, and Hancock leapt in, quick as a well-scripted flash, "that makes two massive pricks on the show this week."

You can easily imagine Eubank becoming, in time, one of that band of fondly regarded (by some, anyway) Slightly Irritating Great British Eccentrics, such as Jimmy Savile, Russell Grant and, until recently, Gary Glitter, whose strangeness, compounded by what Willie Carson called his "ring of steel", will always keep him apart from his fellow men.

20/POWERBOATING

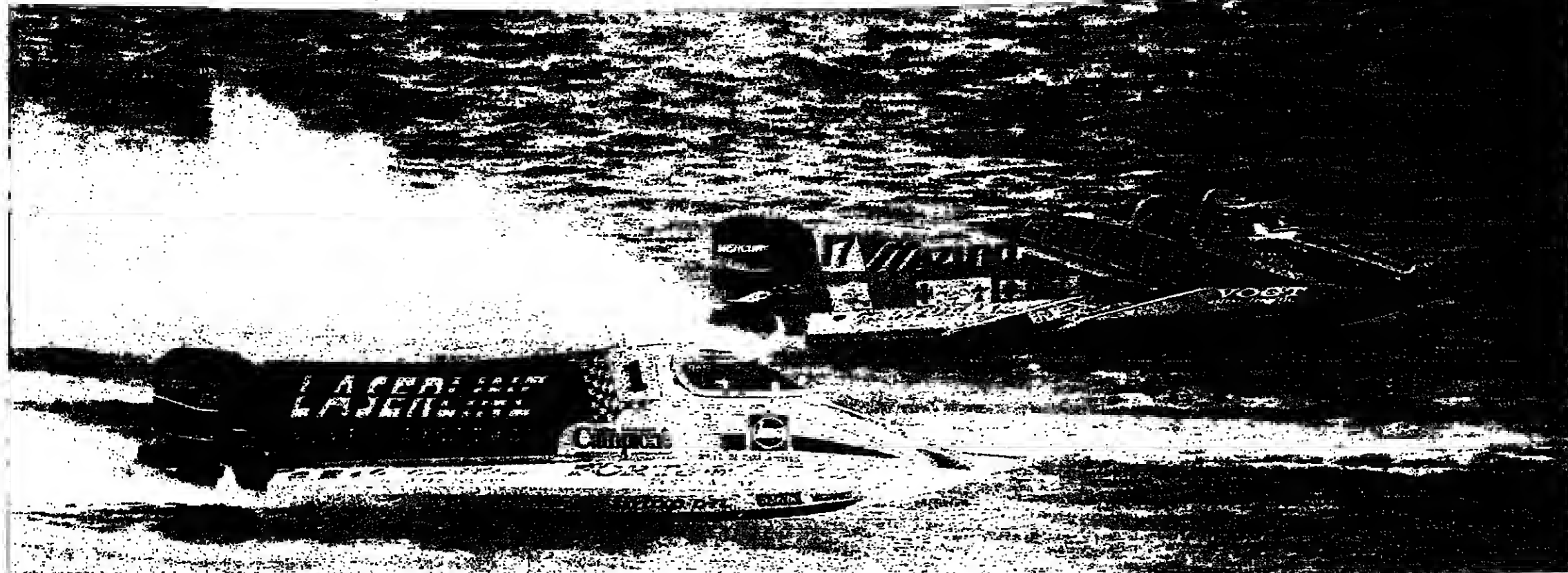
Jones the boat goes out for a spin on Gillman's day

The title had already gone to the United States, but the race for next best ran out of steam for one Italian and left a Welshman's dreams in tatters. Adam Szreter reports from Abu Dhabi on the conclusion of the Formula One Powerboat World Championship.

In near-perfect conditions down at The Wavebreaker in the bay they call the Pearl of the Gulf, Scott Gillman of the United States rounded off his first year on the world Formula One powerboat circuit with victory in the final race of the season here yesterday.

The 40-year-old from Basalt, Colorado, twice the American champion, had already wrapped up his first title in Europe with a race to spare; yesterday was supposed to be all about second place and the battle between Finland's Petri Leppala and Guido Cappellini of Italy, with Cappellini's great rival, Jonathan Jones of Wales, trailing back in fourth overall.

The sight of 24 boats blasting off together from the jetty was an awesome one, as they go from 0-60mph in less than two seconds before reaching a top speed of over 140mph. Cappellini, champion for the past four years, was on pole position and took advantage of the clear water by streaking into a lead of 50 metres by the first turn, about 800m into the L-shaped circuit. Jones had to settle for head-



Guido Cappellini (No 1) races against Tadaki Ishikawa in the final round of this year's world championship in Abu Dhabi yesterday

Photograph: Double Red

ing the chasing pack, but after 20 of the scheduled 45 laps the Italian's lead was already looking impregnable, with Leppala and Gillman back in the bunch. Then Jones struck trouble.

His engine cut out, and although he managed to restart he had dropped back several places. In his haste he seemed to take a gamble at the last turn of the 24th lap and went into a spectacular barrel-roll. The impact of the water shattered his Burgess boat, the race was stopped and Jones was

ushered off to hospital for precautionary X-rays.

It certainly was not the worst Jones has suffered in a 12-year career in Formula One that has seen him win the world title three times as well as being the only European to have won the American title, too.

His last championship, in 1991, was won despite a horrific crash with Cappellini which left scars on Jones' left leg to make you wince. "I'd won the first three races of the season, but

in the fourth race, in Hungary, Cappellini drove into the side of my boat and I ended up with a severely crushed leg," he told me. "They did an eight-hour operation on it, put in 23 pins and said I wouldn't be able to race again that year. But I was very determined and I realised most of the others were off the pace, so I put myself through a rigorous training schedule for three months."

"I managed to convince a local doctor to make a cast for my leg in carbon-fibre to hold it all

together, with hinges on either side. They hauled me into the boat and I managed to get back for the last two races and do just enough to win the championship."

On the restart yesterday Cappellini showed no sign of surrendering, but his compatriots Francesco Cantand and Massimo Roggero were moving smoothly through the field behind Gillman, now in second place. Then, on lap 38, Cappellini suddenly ground to a

halt, possibly through over-revving, and the American inherited the lead with just over five laps remaining.

The upshot was Gillman's fifth victory of the nine-race season, and with another 20 points in the bag he took the championship by a handsome 34 points from Leppala, who came in fourth yesterday after being fined \$5,000 (£3,100) the previous day for what Ralf Fröhling, president of the Union Internationale Motonautique, de-

scribed as "bad behaviour" in qualifying. Cappellini finished third overall, with Britain's Paul Blackburn a creditable sixth yesterday and Alan Marshall ninth.

Jones, happily recovered from his latest ordeal, was understandably disappointed. "As I was approaching the turn, the wind just caught the underneath of the boat and the rest was history," the 39-year-old from Cardigan explained.

"The cockpit hit the water with tremendous force but fortunately I was able to undo my

harness and climb out. I'm very upset because the boat's obviously a write-off and I could have won or at least finished second in the race. I was a bit hazy at first, so they gave me a brain scan and chest X-rays, but I'm OK."

FORMULA 1 WORLD POWERBOAT CHAMPIONSHIP (Abu Dhabi, UAE): 1 S Gillman (US, Seaborn) 50pts, 22.5sec; 2 F Cantand (FR, DAI) +38.6sec; 3 M Roggero (IT, DAI) +1.1sec; 4 P Leppala (FIN, DAI) +1.1sec; 5 V Supham (THAI, DAI) +1.1sec; 6 P Blackburn (GB, Seaborn) +3.1sec; 7 G Cappellini (IT, DAI) +4.1sec; 8 J Jones (GB, Burgess) +4.1sec; 9 A Marshall (GB, Burgess).

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Major weekend football fixtures and pools check

3.0 unless stated

TODAY

FA Carling Premiership

- 1 Arsenal v Blackburn
- 2 Barnsley v Newcastle
- 3 Chelsea v Leeds
- 4 Coventry v Tottenham
- 5 Crystal Palace v Liverpool
- 6 Everton v Wimbledon
- 7 Southampton v Leicester
- 8 West Ham v Sheffield Wed

Nationwide League

First Division

- 9 Birmingham v Man City
- 10 Bradford City v Bury
- 11 Charlton v Port Vale
- 12 Huddersfield v Norwich
- 13 Ipswich v Portsmouth
- 14 Middlesbrough v Reading
- 15 Sheffield Utd v Swindon
- 16 Stockport v Tranmere
- 17 Stoke v Crewe
- 18 Sunderland v WBA

Second Division

- 19 Brentford v Blackpool
- 20 Burnley v Wigan
- 21 Carlisle v Fulham
- 22 Chesterfield v Luton
- 23 Gillingham v Southend
- 24 Plymouth v Millwall
- 25 Preston v Northampton
- 26 Walsall v Bournemouth
- 27 Watford v Bristol City
- 28 Wycombe v Oldham
- 29 York v Wrexham

Third Division

- 30 Barnet v Macclesfield
- 31 Cardiff v Peterborough
- 32 Chester v Darlington
- 33 Hull v Colchester
- 34 Lincoln v Hartlepool
- 35 Mansfield v Brighton
- 36 Notts Co v Doncaster
- 37 Rochdale v Swanssea
- 38 Rotherham v Torquay
- 39 Scunthorpe v Scarborough
- 40 Shrewsbury v L Orient

Bell's Scottish League

Premier Division

- 41 Celtic v Hearts
- 42 Dunfermline v Rangers
- 43 Hibernian v Aberdeen
- 44 Motherwell v Dundee Utd
- 45 St Johnstn v Kilmarnock

First Division

- 46 Ayr v St Mirren
- 47 Dundee v Stirling
- 48 Morton v Falkirk
- 49 Hamilton v Airdrie
- 50 Partick v Raith

* Postponed (stadium closed for safety reasons).

Second Division

- 51 Clydebank v Inverness
- 52 East Fife v Brechin
- 53 Forfar v Livingston
- 54 Stenhousemuir v Stranraer

Third Division

- 55 Arbroath v Cowdenbeath
- 56 Berwick v Montrose
- 57 East Stirling v Albion Rovers
- 58 Queens Park v Alloa
- 59 Ross Co v Dumbarton

Tennent's Scottish Cup

First round

- 60 Fraserburgh v Clyde

TOMORROW

FA Carling Premiership

- 61 Bolton v Derby (4.0)

Nationwide League

First Division

- 62 Wolves v Nottm Forest (4.0)

TODAY'S NUMBER

75,000,000

The number of dollars (\$46m) that Pedro Martinez will receive over the next six years following the contract he signed this week with Boston Red Sox - baseball's most expensive contract ever, beating Gary Sheffield's \$30m six-year deal with Florida Marlins. Boston have a two-year option that would make the contract worth \$92m.

The man who had the passion to set Leeds aflame

At the heart of Leeds United's glory years was Billy Bremner. Today they go to Chelsea where he made his debut 27 years ago. David Robson remembers the midfielder who died this week.

They buried Billy Bremner on Thursday and today Leeds play Chelsea at Stamford Bridge. The celestial authorities certainly know how to make a week of it. For those with age and eyes to see, there will be ghosts out there in front of the Harding stand.

Billy made his first team debut for Leeds against Chelsea at Stamford Bridge. He was 17. It was 1970.

Through his vintage years Chelsea were a special enemy but Billy was often too much for them, then he was often too much for any opposition. Certainly he scored brilliant goals

that beat them in crucial matches; but in 1970 Chelsea inflicted a blow that stays forever in the Yorkshire memory. Leeds were trying to win three trophies that year and ended up winning none of them. There was the League (we got close), the European Cup (not so close) and the FA Cup (it still doesn't bear thinking about).

Chelsea won the replay having been run off the pitch at Wembley to no conclusive effect. I saw, through yellow eyes, the Cup paraded down the King's Road on a double-decker bus escorted by several hundred hideous skinheads.

It took Chelsea 25 years and the importation of half of Europe to create a team fit to compete with the memory of that Osgood, Cooke and Harris lot. Leeds never have produced a team to step into the boots of Billy's. Then they were bigger boots.

I remember watching him in one of his early games at Elland Road, he was small, slight,

ginger-haired and whiny-faced. He was playing on the wing and he ran a bit and scrapped a bit. I remember thinking he was probably just another crap player from Scotland and we'd had plenty of those. Actually we'd had plenty from everywhere. We were more or less useless. Always had been, always would be, it seemed.

Billy was not the beginning of us getting great; that was Don Revie until Bobby Collins and a board of directors with money and ambition. But he became the spirit of Leeds. He was brilliant and dirty, cynical and indomitable. He could do everything: win the ball, beat men, give it long, keep it short, shoot, head, see opportunities,

make opportunities and score goals when all else had failed. He made opponents angry and thrived on it.

A lot of people who didn't love him hated him. Hated us. We were so damn good. At the start of the golden age that stretched from 1965 to '75 we were mean, well organised and hard to beat. By the end of it we were mean, well organised and absolutely sensational.

But perhaps there was some bad karma at play (as they say on the terraces). The lads talked to referees more than any other players on earth, sometimes spent the whole game talking to them, but it didn't stop them from getting some of the worst decisions in human history. It was normal to see Billy "doing" someone, getting penalised and looking aggrieved. Or Norman Hunter doing something trenchant to someone's leg, then raising a hand in acknowledgement to the referee ("Yes I know ref, fair cop! I did it, you saw, be

felt it and I might do it again"). Oh yes, even we realised there was some moral ambiguity (as they say on the terraces).

I remember sitting in the upper tier at Stamford Bridge at a Chelsea-Leeds game and looking down on what nowadays they call "movement". It was awe-inspiring. Nobody ever had the ball without two or three options for laying it off - it was a game made easy. They played in tight little triangles on the left: Hunter-Cooper-Gray, each available for the other. Up front there was Mick Jones, always brave, always strong in the air, laying it off for Allan Clarke to be lethal in the strike. On the right wing there was Peter Lorimer, one of the weaker brethren in this company, but very strong with his right foot 25 yards from goal.

But above all, there was Bremner and Johnny Giles in the midfield, hard little meo working brilliantly together, tackling, dribbling, weaving an intricate basketwork of passes between them as they moved

upfield. Giles had the greater vision but it was Billy who had the passion, the fire that set the team aflame.

I talked to Alan Hudson yesterday, the most gifted Chelsea player of roughly that vintage (he was signing copies of his book *The Working Man's Baller*; Billy's book was called *You Got Nowt for Being Second*).

How good was Billy? "He was brilliant. He was so good he made you play better against him - oo going out on the night before a Leeds game." They were the best weren't they? "Yes, by far. They had great players in every position. We were probably two players short of being a great team."

Were they a dirty team? "Yes, very dirty." Would they have done even better if they hadn't been? "I don't think they could. It was part of their character. They liked frightening people." Did you hate them? "Yes, we hated them and they hated us. We'd like to have played them every week."



Billy Bremner lifts aloft the FA Cup after Leeds' 1-0 victory over Arsenal in 1972. Photograph: PA

Mulhall revives a dream from decay at The Shay



Head groundsman Jim Green (blue top) and ground superintendent Graham Osbourne prepare the pitch at Halifax Town's ground, The Shay, this week for the onslaught of Christmas matches. Photograph: Peter Jay

Six months ago the future, like the past, looked bleak for Halifax Town. But the call to arms of an old servant invigorated the club who now find themselves tantalisingly close to a return to the League. Guy Hodgson reports

Take a look upwards from The Shay and the brooding Beacon Hill of the Pennines stares back at you. Until recently it summed up Halifax Town's position: the club at the bottom, Football League status at the top. No, transplant Everest and you get a truer picture.

Last May Halifax Town, original members of the Third Division North in 1921 and so used to being in trouble "crisis" should have been incorporated in the club crest, were only a game away from joining the Unibond League. Today they are seven points clear in the GM Vauxhall Conference and the League status they reluctantly surrendered in 1993 is suddenly attainable.

It is, as the *Yorkshire Post* put it succinctly recently, a "miracle" to rival the moment Lazarus opened his eyes and wondered why on earth he had dozed off in a cave.

In Halifax they are rubbing their eyes and wondering, too. The club has flirted with oblivion for so long the neighbours

had long since stopped talking and even Robert Maxwell took a look at The Shay's finances and thought better of buying. "It had a tenuous link with financial stability to say the least," the chairman of three years and supporter for 43, John Stockwell agreed. "We had the inland Revenue trying to wind us up with the VAT people close behind."

A new, manageable, rental agreement with the local council, who own the ground, and the directors digging into their own pockets shook off the financial jackals and with gates around 2,000 the club can now afford to spend £1m on The Shay to make it fit for elevation. Work begins on 5 January.

Stockwell the instigator of

the financial turn-around, like the supporters, credits George Mulhall with the revival on the field. Manager of the club in their heyday - and here we are talking the old Third Division 25 years ago - he arrived on "keep us up and job's yours" basis in February.

"You have to lay a lot of credit at his door," Stockwell said. "He's brought in his own people and a good attitude and professional standards. He has transformed the club. If the season finished tomorrow I could say I've had more enjoyment this year than ever before."

Mulhall, a 61-year-old Scot, had been a manager at various clubs including Bolton and Bradford City and was coaching youngsters at Huddersfield

when he was asked to help at Halifax. His priority was a leaky defence which he plugged with a variety of ex-League players including the 35-year-old former Coventry captain, Brian Kilcline.

He also changed the style to a less direct one which has worked to the extent that Halifax - the only club in senior football with a 100 per cent home record.

"I wouldn't go as far as to say they used to be a long ball team," Mulhall said, "but I'm of the opinion the longer you kick it the more chance you have of losing possession. I like to keep the ball, be more patient and pass with purpose. Let's put it this way, you won't play for me unless you can pass the ball."

When Halifax beat Huddersfield's first team pre-season, Mulhall realised he had the makings of a useful side. How useful, he is still not certain and he worries that a few injuries might do. "I'm happy where we are," he said. "I'd be foolish to say otherwise, but the bottom line is that we haven't won anything yet. I see two or three games and the situation changes dramatically."

"The club's desperate to get back in the League like most clubs in the GM Vauxhall Conference. Could we survive if we got there? I think maybe the top six could play in the Third Division."

Stockwell, who had to live with the memories of FA Cup wins over West Bromwich Al-

bion and Manchester City to sustain him through the dark days, would love to think so. "I feel particularly pleased for the hard core of supporters," he said. "Last year we were down to about 700 diehards and they stuck with us through thick and thin, mainly thin. On Tuesday we had 2,100 on a wet, miserable night to watch us beat Northwich Victoria."

"The success this season hasn't really sunk in. I know I'll be chuffed to bits if we do make it, but I don't really want to think about it until we get there. We've had very few high-lights and a lot of low lights at Halifax."

Like '93 when they went out of the League? "It felt like we'd fallen off the flat earth."

Pele makes an impact as he tries to drag Brazilian club football into the modern world



AROUND THE WORLD
BY RUPERT METCALF

BRAZIL

The conflict between Brazil's most famous footballer, Pele, and his compatriot Joao Havelange, the president of world football's governing body, Fifa, continues unabated.

A bill drawn up by Pele, who is Brazil's sports minister, to modernise the country's domestic football is safely on its way through parliament.

Pele's bill, which has angered Havelange, would oblige clubs to become privately run companies within two years, force them to start paying tax and allow them to organise

their own leagues independent of the current state and national federations. Professional players will become free agents at the age of 20, freeing them from ties to their clubs.

Under the current system, clubs are affiliated to Brazil's state federations and must take part in competitions organised by them and the CBF, the national confederation. They are also exempt from paying tax.

The country's domestic football is in a shambolic state. The competitions organised by the CBF and the state federations are often chaotic, crowds are usually pitifully

small and most clubs have to sell their top players abroad.

Havelange warned earlier this year that Brazil could be suspended from Fifa if the bill ever becomes law. He said that the bill contravenes Fifa

statutes, which ban government interference in national federations. There has been speculation, though, that his opposition to the bill is based more on his animosity towards Pele than on legal opinion.



179 DAYS
UNTIL THE
START
OF THE
WORLD CUP
FINALS

SAUDI ARABIA

Like Iran, Nigeria and Mexico, it seems that another country bounds for the World Cup finals are about to ditch the coach who guided them to France.

Saudi Arabia's fortunes in the Confederations Cup, the eight-team international tournament that started yesterday which they host, are the responsibility of Otto Pfister, the German coach who oversaw their successful World Cup qualifying campaign. However, he will then be replaced by Carlos Alberto Parreira, according to reports from Riyadh.

Parreira, who took Brazil to their record fourth World Cup victory in 1994, is due to sign a one-year contract to take charge of Saudi Arabia on 1 January. He is currently the coach of the New York-New Jersey MetroStars, and his move to the Middle East depends on an agreement between the Major League Soccer club and the Saudis.

"If the Saudi Football Federation can't satisfy us, we're not just going to make a good-will gesture," the MetroStars' general manager, Charlie Stillitano, said.

Parreira is no stranger to the

Gulf. He led Kuwait to the World Cup finals in Spain in 1982 and the United Arab Emirates to Italy in 1990.

NIGERIA

It has been reported in Lagos that Nigeria's Football Association has chosen its new coach from a short-list of three: the former national team coach Jo Bonfrere, Bora Milutinovic (just sacked by Mexico) and Terry Venables. The lucky man cannot be named, though - until Nigeria's military government approves the choice of the football authorities.

24/FOOTBALL



'All I do is play my game and the goals are there to look at,' says West Ham's John Hartson

Photograph: Empics

Upton Park reaps riches of Hartson the trouble-shooter

First his ability was disparaged, then his lifestyle. But 22 goals in 32 games has silenced the criticism of John Hartson's football and now he hopes to refute the vilification of his character. The West Ham striker has proved the bargain of the year and will be out to emphasise his worth against Sheffield Wednesday today.

John Hartson had a touch of flu earlier this week so West Ham sent him home from training and quarantined him. This meant our interview had to be conducted on the telephone, not ideal but, according to tabloid legend probably a blessing in disguise. If you believe all you read he would have dragged me down the hoover for an all-day bender taking in the trashing of a hotel before driving home.

"I don't know where you got that idea from," responded the alleged Wild Man of Pottery Bar when I laid that scenario before him. "I live with my fiancée, Lowry, and I don't think she'd like me out every night; golf's more my relaxation. I have the odd night out with the boys but no more than the average 22-year-old."

Hartson admits that: "I have been caught up in a few things the last couple of weeks," - notably a night out which ended with police involvement and the ill-advised comment in his local newspaper column after Rio Ferdinand's drink-driving arrest that "we've all done it" - but adds: "I'm learning the hard way, the experience will stand me in good stead."

For a 22-year-old Hartson has already acquired a lot of experience, good and bad. Swansea born and bred, he was spotted as a 10-year-old by Luton. Nine years later, half-way through his second season in the Hatters' first team, he signed for Arsenal for £2.5m, the most expensive fee paid for a teenager. Within a month George Graham, the man who bought him, had been sacked. "I didn't know what to think," said Hartson. "I was just a kid."

Initially the change did not affect his progress, Stewart Houston took over. Hartson kept his place as Arsenal reached the final of the European Cup-Winners' Cup, Hartson scoring in the defeat.

Then came Bruce Rioch... and Dennis Bergkamp. He was partnered with Ian Wright. "Two great players," said Hartson. "I was out in the cold." There was no change under Arsène Wenger and, last February, Harry Redknapp, desperate for a striker to keep West Ham up, paid a reported £5m for Hartson.

The actual fee was £3.2m which

may rise to £5m but the latter figure took the public eye. Chelsea had just bought Gianfranco Zola for less and reaction was harsh, notably from the two Dannels, Baker and Kelly. Then broadcasting on BBC Radio Five Live they decried this "waste of money" in withering terms and appealed to West Ham fans travelling to Hartson's debut match at Derby to follow suit.

Hartson scored five goals in 11 games to lift West Ham clear of relegation and leads this season's charts with 17 in 21. A fortnight ago, in a rare show of humility, Baker and Kelly, now on Talkback Radio, admitted their error adding that every time he scored it "was like a knife through the heart".

Words to bring a glow of satisfaction to Hartson were he inclined to put the knife in but, not surprisingly, he was not listening at the time. Nor, bolstered by the security of his goals, does he seem bothered by the memory of their criticism.

"If it came from somebody I respected," he said, "someone like Kenny Dalglish, Ian Rush or Alan Shearer, people who've done something in the game, I'd be offended. But it's come from people who know nothing about football."

BY GLENN MOORE

"There is nothing I can do about it. It's not very nice but it's something you have to live with. These people are just employed by BBC or whoever to stir things up; they're doing their job."

"The fans have been superb. I scored on my home debut when we beat Tottenham 4-3, I kissed my shirt and the fans realised I was dedicated to the club. I have gone from strength to strength since. I've been fortunate enough to score lots of goals and they'll expect that now but I'm confident I will score if I keep fit and well."

"I don't feel I've proved something to anyone - or that I've anything to prove - all I do is play my game and the goals are there to look at."

Worth seeing as well. Naturally enough for a barnstorming 14st, 6ft-plus centre-forward a fair number are headers but he has also been thumping shots in from around the box at all angles.

"I'm not playing as well as I can but I'm scoring lots of goals so I can't complain. A lot of it is confidence and I'm playing in a good side which is creating lots of chances. We are getting crosses in and Eyal Berkovich has been outstanding, he's been laying it on a plate for me. If we can start winning away from home we'll be in a decent position."

Hartson's immediate ambitions are to help Wales to the European Championship finals - "no disrespect but Scotland and Ireland are not that far ahead of us in players, we just have to get it together as a team" - and West Ham to Wembley. "I went to the FA Cup final with Kerry Dixon [a team-mate, rival, friend and mentor in Hartson's Luton days] and thought 'it would be great for the fans if West Ham were here, they'd go in their droves'."

West Ham's Wembley prospects - they play Arsenal in the quarter-finals of the Littlewoods Cup next month - are helped by Hartson managing to avoid suspension. Last season he was sent off with Arsenal and booked almost every game for West Ham. This season he has been comparatively angelic.

"I had a chat to Harry [Redknapp] before the season and he said he wanted me in the team, not suspended in the stand, so I had a serious look at it. It is also because I've been carrying a knee injury so I've not been flying into tackles so much. Though I'm still committed I've had to curb it. I don't want to say too much though as I'll might get sent off this week and make myself look a mug."

"I got 11 bookings last year but three or four of those were very harsh. Suddenly I'm a dirty player with a bad reputation. People jump on bandwagons and point the finger at you."

His worst offence this season has been verbal, strongly criticising the referee Mike Read after West Ham's match at Leicester. It added fuel to his off-field reputation but his improved on-field behaviour helped him escape heavy punishment - unlike, ironically, Danny Baker whose departure from the BBC followed criticism of Read after last season's FA Cup tie between Chelsea and Leicester. This helped create the climate for Hartson's accusation that Read was a biased towards Leicester.

"If someone asks me an honest question I give an honest answer but I'm learning to be careful. I've had a lot of press, good and bad. People try and make a few quid out of you, they sell a little quote somewhere, there's nothing you can do about it. You can't not talk to anybody because that's not pleasing the public - they want to know about you."

"I don't put anything on, I'm just myself. My real mates know me. I go to Wales often and see the boys from school. They also come to watch me play. They've told me they're glad I've not forgotten where I come from and I said I'll never do that because that's not the kind of guy I am."

No club has a divine right to be in the élite any more

The Pompey Chimes probably rang out with extra gusto on Tuesday after beleaguered Portsmouth beat Wolves 3-2 to haul themselves off the bottom of the First Division, but I bet they had a hollow ring to them.

It's a sad statistic that a tie which, in its postwar heyday would have attracted around 50,000, drew just 8,042 - 2,660 short of Pompey's biggest gate this season - and even sadder that the majority left the ground buoyant just because Pompey had recorded their fifth win of the season.

It's a far cry from the good old days of 1939, when Pompey beat Wolves in the FA Cup final and went on to win back-to-back championships the following decade before Wolves gained the ascendancy. But then, misty-eyed nostalgia is par for the course when you're a sleeping giant and they don't come much more gigantic than Wolves, or more somnolent than Portsmouth.

"Sleeping giant" is one of football's more enduring clichés, if only because few ever actually wake up and most have inferiority complexes caused by perennial underachievement. It took a combination of Kenny Dalglish's acumen and Jack Walker's millions to rally Blackburn, and the "Messiah", no less, to rouse New-

castle (although one wonders whether Kevin Keegan will have quite such a stirring effect on sleepy Fulham).

It's also a term which is rare beyond English football. True, Torino (the Manchester City of Italian football) and Genoa both fit the bill, languishing as they are in Serie B. But in the Netherlands and Spain, for example, the game has traditionally been dominated by just a few teams and very few Davids have ever seriously challenged the Goliaths. In Scotland, where the championship has left Glasgow just 12 times in 50 years, Dundee are the closest thing to a sleeping giant. If only for the 40,000-plus crowds they drew during their 1963 European run.

In English football, however, sleeping giants are as constant a feature in the game as, er, four divisions, three-up three-down, and two halves: among them, (in addition to Wolves and Portsmouth) Birmingham, Burnley, Fulham, Huddersfield, Manchester City, Blackpool, Charlton, Preston and, arguably, West Bromwich and Carlisle.

But does a sleeping giant ever cease to be a sleeping giant? Probably not, since the potential and the fan base will always be there; it's the money that's so often lacking, and these days that's a pretty big lack.



OLIVIA BLAIR

ON THE PAIN AND PLEASURE (MOSTLY PAIN) OF FOLLOWING PORTSMOUTH

It's the reason, for instance, why Birmingham, Wolves, Fulham, and even Charlton and Huddersfield, are now deemed bigger clubs than Portsmouth, whose record transfer fee paid remains £650,000 (for Gerry Creaney), who failed to pay their wage bill last month, and who still have one boot firmly rooted in the past.

To be fair, that's partly due to the restrictions on the redevelopment of Fratton Park, which is the sole option currently open to the club after plans for a new stadium on the city's outskirts were torpedoed by the Department of the Environment, and they

couldn't agree a price with the owners of the only other possible site, a nearby vacant goods yard. But they've made the best of a bad job: the capacity is up around 17,000 and at least it looks like a football ground again with the completed stand at the Fratton End and the north terrace covered. But the Milton End is a redevelopment non-starter since it backs on to houses, while the South Stand hasn't changed much since 1926.

Of course, the Terry Venables saga has muddled the waters. The promised potential investors - and El Tel's appearances at the training ground, allegedly - have been as rare as league points, while the World Cup qualification campaign has shorn the team of its numerous Australians, and wannabe Jamaicans, Paul Hall and Fitzroy Simpson.

However, the malaise at Portsmouth is no recent phenomenon. Call it perennial underachievement, call it what you will - it's been the same old story ever since my dad took me to my first ever game in 1976, in which Pompey were looking for their first home League win (and this was in January). They got it, but were relegated to the old Third Division in May, and slipped down to the Fourth two years later.

By 1983 they were back in the Second Division, and even

hit the heights in 1987, but the flirtation lasted just one season. In short, it seems - and this probably hurts for a club with strong naval associations - that when the waters get choppy, Pompey simply haven't got the sea legs.

Having said that, at least they have come closer to glory than any of the aforementioned sleeping giants, namely when Jim Smith steered a side containing the likes of John Beresford and a prodigy called Darren Anderton to within a John Barnes free-kick of the 1992 FA Cup final. But the heart of that team was ripped out and sold on, and it was back to the status quo.

Never mind status quo; it now appears that Pompey's future could rest on the persuasive powers of Brian Howe of Bad Company fame, an exiled Portsmouther who's trying to encourage an American millionaire to invest in the club.

But it's still pie in the sky, and the proposition is hardly an attractive one. Twenty-five years ago, the then chairman John Deacon talked about restoring the club to its rightful place among the élite. But as sleeping giants know only too well, no club has that divine right any more, and in Pompey's case it's First Division safety that's the goal. The cry must surely be not play up Pompey, but wake up Pompey.

A blessed relief to the City pain in Spain

As a child in Manchester, I knew a boy who owned a rather interesting football shirt. Its colours were neither sky blue or red, and he was a Liverpool supporter anyway, so I had no idea what this partly wine-coloured jersey wrapped round his ribs was. When he said it was from Barcelona, I thought nothing of it because, like most eight-year-old Mancunians, I had no idea where Barcelona was.

My first exposure to Barca as a playing side was after my football-supporting nemesis had waltzed into school after he had seen Manchester United trounce Barca.

One of the Barca team my 10-year-old self hadn't heard of. His name? Diego Maradona. This appeared to mean something to my red-nosed colleague. As a huenoso who saw United win the cup 10 days after City's 1983 relegation, my instinct was to feel affinity to the underdogs. How little I understood.

Years later, I opted to learn Spanish at school. After the nightmare of Latin, I wasn't going for any more of that nominative, accusative, genitive nonsense essential to German. In fourth year, I was offered an exchange visit with a lad in... Barcelona. Once I had seen a postcard of the Nou Camp, I knew why I wanted

to stay with a stranger called David. His family was keen to show me the Gaudi architecture, the Ramblas, the site of what was to become the Montjuïc Olympic Stadium, the Ciutatella Park etc, but I was waiting for the big one: Nou Camp. We witnessed a 2-0 win over Racing Santander from the uppermost echelons, deriving as much fun from my paper darts as from the football. Come on, I was only

FAN'S EYE VIEW
NO 236
BARCELONA
BY
MARC STARR

14! One Gary Winaton Lineker was in Venables' side, and he scored both goals. Marvellous.

Fast forward five years. I was there to improve my Spanish, and I was lucky enough to witness a Barca-Madrid game. That season, Barcelona won the title and the European Cup, which provided me with two of my best ever nights out. I returned several times, seeing Barca v Espanyol at Sarria in 1994 and one of Ronaldo's performances two years later in which he scored twice.

Nevertheless, I have been asked why Barca appeals to me. After all, aren't they the Manchester United of Spain? Both sets of fans think the right to win is theirs, they become indignant when this right is challenged by anyone, yet they don't like being reminded that, despite claims of being the biggest, most successful clubs in the world, their deadliest rivals, Liverpool and Real Madrid respectively, have won at least three more European Cups than their own team, surely the most effective yardstick for greatness.

By rights, then, I should hate Barca. But it is my bit of luxury, my compensation for following my team to drubblings in places such as (and others even bleaker than) Barnsley. Like an office girl who stares longingly at pictures of Keana Reeves, but who still wouldn't swap him for her Sunday League-playing brickie husband, I might like to wish that Hristo Stoichkov and Giovanni could join Georgi Kinkladze and Kevin Horlock, but I still stood there in 1992 with a million wild-eyed Catalans with the distinct feeling that I'd still rather have been on the Kippax, a month earlier watching City stuff Leeds, eventual champions that year, by four goals to nada. Wouldn't you?

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Rivals in dogfight for the right to chase United

Four of the Premiership's top five meet today in a programme that will help define who are best suited to challenge Manchester United.

Guy Hodgson looks at the weekend ahead, while Nick Harris (below) analyses the programme match by match.

There are good times and bad times to have the weekend off. Sometimes a team can endure their rivals creeping up or past them while they idle away the hours at Sky's behest: today Manchester United can watch their main rivals inflict damage on each other.

While United do not play Aston Villa until Monday night, the four teams immediately behind them meet today, knocking lumps and points off each other. Second-placed Chelsea meet Leeds (fifth) while Blackburn (third) travel to Arsenal (fourth), with all four aware they cannot afford to give the champions a further advantage.

That was underlined last week. Arsenal defeated Newcastle at St James' Park last Saturday almost to the day when

they prevailed on Tyneside to go top of the Premiership 12 months earlier. United, embroiled in the Champions' League, were only sixth on that occasion and still went on to win the League by seven points. The fact that they are top at this stage of the season is ominous.

Chelsea are nearest to their coat-tails, three points behind, which is a tribute to Ruud Gullit's management of a team whose key players are either approaching the footballing watersheds of 30 or have long since waved it goodbye. Only he will know who is playing today. The rest of us do not have a clue.

"They have some excellent players," said Gunnar Halle, the Leeds defender who will attempt to halt an attack which scored six at Tottenham last

week. "But the way Ruud Gullit picks his side even my Norwegian team-mate, Tor Andre Flo, who got a hat-trick, can't be sure of playing."

It does not make it easy for opposing managers, either, when they may have to counter the air force of the 6ft 2in Flo or the groundswell of the 5ft 6in Gianfranco Zola. Throw in the contrasting styles of Mark Hughes and Gianluca Vialli and the opposition need centre-backs who can adapt over and over again. "It's the kind of game you look forward to as a coach," George Graham said, "pitting your wits against some of the best players in the Premiership."

Chelsea have lost only once since 26 October, a spell in which Leeds have accumulated four wins and a draw. They are

the two form teams and the only clubs to have matched Old Trafford's greed for points.

Only Arsenal have beaten United since then, a win which was squandered by successive defeats. As ever, suspensions cloud Arsène Wenger's calculations for the visit of Blackburn and he has to decide whether to risk the fit-again Patrick Vieira, who is just a booking away from missing a Christmas programme which includes Tottenham and Leeds. At least Steve Bould has served his three-match ban.

Of course, if Tottenham play like they did in the second half against Chelsea you could put out your youth team and get a favourable result, and their new coach, Christian Gross, may be forced to use Sol Campbell at Coventry, even though

his shoulder still hurts him.

"I want to do what I can for the club in this difficult time," the England defender said. Now if all Spurs' highly paid players could say the same they would not be three points of the bottom of the table.

Everton, like Tottenham, are a club of ifs and many buts, and another loomed on Monday evening: if only Everton's defence could deal with attacks as adroitly as their chairman, Peter Johnson's masterly manipulation of events at the club's annual meeting left his critics frustrated. Now the hard part comes: being similarly proficient on the field.

Everton, second bottom, have gained two points from their last seven matches since beating Liverpool in October,

and as their manager, Howard Kendall, said to fans on Monday: "We know you deserve better." They can begin to put that right against Wimbledon today.

The are due a bounce-back as Neil Ardley, Wimbledon's midfielder conceded. "We cannot go to Goodison with the attitude they are bottom," he said, "because teams like that are fighting for their lives. They have been unlucky recently."

So have Barnsley, who could have been four points better off from their matches against Leeds and Sheffield Wednesday but finished with none. It appears that the effort required just to match teams in the Premiership leaves them flagging after an hour, and opponents take advantage. At least Danny Wilson's

team are facing Newcastle United, who have failed to score in their last two Premiership matches.

Ron Atkinson's Wednesday revival faces its stiffest test to date with an appointment with the Premiership's leading scorer, West Ham's John Harrison, while Southampton (four successive defeats) and Leicester (one win in five matches) will be desperate for differing reasons at The Dell.

If anxiety is your drug, however, the best venue would be Selhurst Park, where Liverpool's dwindling credibility as title challengers badly needs a lift. Another defeat and the natives, already restless, will be positively hostile by next weekend, when the team meets their *bête noire* of recent seasons, Coventry.

Arsenal v Blackburn

Bergkamp 12 Leading scorer Last season: 1-1

Arsène Wenger will make a late decision on whether to recall Patrick Vieira, who returns to the squad after four games out injured, but is only just back in full training. Steve Bould has cleared a three-match ban and is available again but may be on the substitutes' bench after Tony Adams and Martin Keown both performed well in the Gunners' 1-0 win at Newcastle last week. Gilles Grimandi is still suspended. Ian Wright is likely to start again up front alongside Dennis Bergkamp.

Blackburn have added teenage striker James Beattie to their squad. Beattie's only senior start for Blackburn came against Arsenal at Ewood Park 14 months ago. Beattie has scored 15 times in the reserves this season, including twice against Manchester United on Thursday. Roy Hodgson will be probably be without Damian Duff who has a thigh injury. Hodgson is still looking for a new striker with Martin Dahlin struggling with injury and Chris Sutton set to serve a one-match suspension. There is a slight doubt over full-back Jeff Kenna (ankle).

Barnsley v Newcastle

Redfern 7 Leading scorer Barnes, April 6 Last season: No fixture

Barnsley's Arjan de Zeeuw and Peter Markstedt both missed Monday's 2-1 Yorkshire derby defeat at Sheffield Wednesday with groin and neck injuries respectively. While Markstedt is fit again, De Zeeuw is doubtful for a game in which South African international Eric Tinkler is back in contention. Tinkler, who returned in midweek after playing for his country in their defeat against Brazil on Sunday, will immediately fly out after today's game to link up with the South Africans for the Confederations Cup event in Saudi Arabia.

Alessandro Pistone is very doubtful for Newcastle today. The former Internazionale defender injured his back in Wednesday's Champions League 2-0 victory over Dynamo Kiev and his chances of playing are small. John Beresford (thigh strain) is close to full fitness after recovering and he could return in place of the Italian. Kenny Dalglish also has three more of his players close to match fitness after injury. Warren Barton (thigh), Steve Howey (blistered feet) and Ian Rush (knee) should all be in contention or close to it today.

Chelsea v Leeds

Vialli 10 Leading scorer Wallace 10 Last season: 0-0

Tore Andre Flo's first hat-trick in English football at Tottenham last week means he will keep his place in the Chelsea side. With Mark Hughes beginning a three-match ban, Flo will partner Gianfranco Zola up front at the expense of Gianluca Vialli. Nigerian Celestine Babayaro (foot) is a doubt for Ruud Gullit, although Steve Clarke is available and Andy Myers and Danny Granville came through a reserve match unscathed in the week and are in the squad.

Jimmy Hasselbaink is likely to replace Harry Kewell in the Leeds attack as the Australian international is currently playing in the Confederations Cup in Saudi Arabia. Hasselbaink should be preferred to Derek Lilley, despite the Scot scoring two goals and setting up the third in a 3-1 reserve team win over Tranmere on Thursday. Captain David Hopkin returns after a three-game ban to the midfield, with Lee Bowyer likely to make way, while South African Lucas Radebe plays his last game for two weeks because of Confederations Cup duty followed by a two-match suspension.

Coventry v Tottenham

Dublin 8 Leading scorer Last season: 1-2

Paul Williams and Willie Boland are suspended for Coventry, while Gary Breen and David Burrows face forthcoming bans. Gary McAllister and Noel Whelan are expected to start together in midfield for the first time since Coventry won 2-1 at Tottenham in May, the result that kept them in the Premiership. McAllister (knee) missed last weekend's 3-0 defeat at Aston Villa but will play despite not being fully fit. Darren Huckerby is under treatment for an ankle injury and if he doesn't play his place will go to Simon Haworth.

Third-bottom Tottenham will be without Sol Campbell after his failure to fully recover from a shoulder injury. He returned to training this week but has not progressed sufficiently to feature. John Scales (cheek fracture and damaged ribs) has volunteered to play but will not. Ramon Vega is suspended, and Christian Gross will probably recall Gary Mabbutt and switch Colin Calderwood back into defence. Andy Sinton has recovered from a foot injury and Darren Anderton is included in a squad that also features Jose Dominguez.

Crystal Palace v Liverpool

Shipperley 5 Leading scorer Last season: No fixture

Crystal Palace manager Steve Coppell will wait as long as possible before choosing his team for today's game so that injured players have the maximum time to recover. Bruce Dyer, Attilio Lombardo and Andy Roberts are all struggling but Coppell is keen to have them involved. Dyer and Roberts have both missed the last two games since picking up injuries against Newcastle at the end of November. Lombardo has not played since 8 November after a hamstring injury and is unlikely to start, although he may get a place on the bench. Palace are still looking for their first home win.

Liverpool will be without Karhenz Riedle, who has been suffering from flu all week and did not travel south with Roy Evans' squad. Rob Jones played in a reserve game on Thursday but is not considered fit enough to challenge for his place. Jason McAteer will continue in the side while Phil Babb and Steve Harkness will both challenge for a place in defence. Paul Ince, now over a three-match suspension, has a groin strain and a decision will be made nearer kick-off.

...And statistics

United and Chelsea lead the goal rush

If it is goals you want to see, look no further than the Premiership. The last six weeks have produced a remarkable run of goalscoring: the 52 Premiership games played since the end of October have produced 160 goals, at an average of just over three per game.

Overall, Premiership goalscoring this season (average 1.39 goals per team per game) is up 10 per cent on last year (1.28). If the present pattern continues the season's rate will be one of the highest in the top division of English football in the last 30 years.

Behind the figures, however, are trends which might be considered less healthy. The Nationwide League is not enjoying any increase in goalscoring, while the Premiership figures appear to confirm the growing divide within the top flight.

Seven of the Premiership's 20 clubs - Manchester United, Chelsea, Derby, Arsenal, Blackburn, Sheffield Wednesday and Liverpool - have scored half the goals. To narrow the scoring down even further, Manchester United (average 2.53 goals per game) and Chelsea (2.41) are streets ahead of the field; the Premiership average is 1.39 and all the other 18 clubs are averaging fewer than two goals per game.

Goals per game 1997-98	Goals	Games	Average
Man United	43	18	2.53
Chelsea	41	17	2.41
Derby	30	16	1.88
Arsenal	31	17	1.82
Blackburn	30	17	1.76
Sheff Wed	30	17	1.76
Liverpool	27	16	1.69
Leeds	26	17	1.53
West Ham	24	17	1.41
Leicester	22	17	1.29
Newcastle	18	16	1.20
Southampton	20	17	1.18
Aston Villa	19	17	1.12
Wimbledon	19	17	1.12
Crystal Palace	17	17	1.00
Everton	16	17	0.94
Barnsley	15	17	0.88
Tottenham	14	17	0.82
Bolton	13	17	0.76
Coventry	13	17	0.76

Goals per game: The Premiership's best records over a whole season

Season	Goals	Games	Average
Man United 1996-97	76	38	2.00
Newcastle 1993-94	82	42	1.95
Man United 1995-96	73	38	1.92
Newcastle 1996-97	73	38	1.92
Blackburn 1994-95	80	42	1.90
Man United 1994-95	80	42	1.90

Six or more goals in a game by one team (Premiership matches)

Goals	Matches
1992-93	4
1993-94	2
1994-95	5
1995-96	5
1996-97	5
1997-98	5

*no data

Gianfranco Zola's goals have helped Chelsea into second position in the Premiership goalscoring chart

...and the worst

Season	Goals	Games	Average
Leeds 1996-97	28	38	0.74
Crystal Palace 1994-95	34	42	0.81
Nottm Forest 1996-97	31	38	0.82
Ipswich 1993-94	35	42	0.83
Ipswich 1994-95	36	42	0.86
Man City 1995-96	33	38	0.87



Everton v Wimbledon

Cadarnant, Speed 5 Leading scorer Last season: 1-3

Everton will be without suspended Slaven Bilic and Duncan Ferguson today. Manager Howard Kendall has named teenage striker Danny Cadarnant in the starting line-up to play alongside Nick Barnby, while Carl Tiler will continue in defence. Kendall has also brought in the teenagers Phil Jeffers and Francis Jeffers (still only 16) and both will be on the bench. Everton's three wins this season have all come at home, but even if they are successful in securing a fourth today, it may not be enough to lift them out of the relegation zone.

Wimbledon will be without Carl Hughes and Chris Perry. Hughes is ruled out again through suspension, as is defender Perry. Manager Joe Kinnear has been without injured Scottish defender Brian McAllister recently so, with only Dean Blackwell as a recognised central defender, he may switch Kenny Cunningham from right-back to the middle of the defence and draft in Alan Kimble, who replaced Carl Court against Southampton last week. Efan Ekoku (ankle) has an outside chance of recovery after being injured for nearly a month.

Southampton v Leicester

Davies 10 Leading scorer Last season: 2-2

Matt Le Tissier will not find out until today whether he will start for the Saints, who are anxious to end a run of three successive Premiership defeats. Le Tissier was substituted during the 1-0 loss to Wimbledon last weekend and his place is under threat from the fit-again Norwegian international Egil Ostenstad, who has not started a game since October following surgery on his ankle but replaced Le Tissier at Selhurst Park. If the out-of-form Le Tissier is dropped, Ostenstad could be part of a three-man front line alongside Kevin Davies and David Hirst. Robbie Slater is on international duty while left back Lee Todd is ruled out with a groin problem.

Emile Heskey returns from a three-match suspension to bolster Leicester's attack. Steve Guppy and Steve Walsh join an 18-man squad after missing last week's 1-1 draw against Crystal Palace through illness. Manager Martin O'Neill will recall all three with Steve Claridge, Rob Ullathorne and Stuart Campbell expected to be relegated to the bench. Leicester are likely to drop from the top six unless they win.

West Ham v Sheff Wed

Harrison 17 Leading scorer Last season: 5-1

West Ham striker Paul Kitson (groin) should start his first game for nearly three months. If he does start, it will be partnering John Harrison up front. Right wing-back Andy Impey is challenging for Tim Bracker's place, but John Moncur has had a flu problem all week and is unlikely to feature. Goalkeeper Lukic, Mikosko has a recurring neck injury and it is likely that Craig Forrest, who has had a similar problem, will return to the side, especially in light of Mikosko's two errors handing Derby both goals in last week's 2-0 defeat.

Ron Atkinson is likely to name an unchanged Sheffield Wednesday line-up for today's trip to London following Monday's 2-1 Yorkshire derby victory at home to Barnsley. The only switch could be the return of Jon Newsome to the starting XI if he has recovered from a groin strain which kept him out of that win. New signing Nicolas Alexandersson, a £750,000 buy from IFK Gothenburg, is likely to be on the bench, while captain Peter Atherton remains unavailable through suspension.

Bolton v Derby

Blake 8 Leading scorer Last season: No fixture

Bolton, looking for their third consecutive home win, have doubts over goalkeeper Keith Branagan (groin) and Gerry Taggart (groin) for tomorrow's game at the Reebok Stadium. If Branagan fails to recover from the injury he sustained in the 3-1 defeat at Blackburn last week, Colin Todd has a replacement in Gavin Vague, the former Bradford goalkeeper who has not played in a League match for 10 months. Taggart pulled up after 25 minutes of a midweek reserve game and manager Todd will keep faith with the central defensive partnership of Mark Fish and Andy Todd to combat the threat of Paulo Wanchope and Dean Surridge.

Derby will be looking to emulate the home form, that has seen them unbeaten at Pride Park in the Premiership this season, on their travels. The influential Italian playmaker Stefano Eranio has recovered from a head injury sustained in the 2-0 win over West Ham last week and is expected to start. The Croatian Igor Stimac, who returned from injury against the Hammers, is expected to continue his recovery by leading his side out as captain again.

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP: HOW THEY STAND

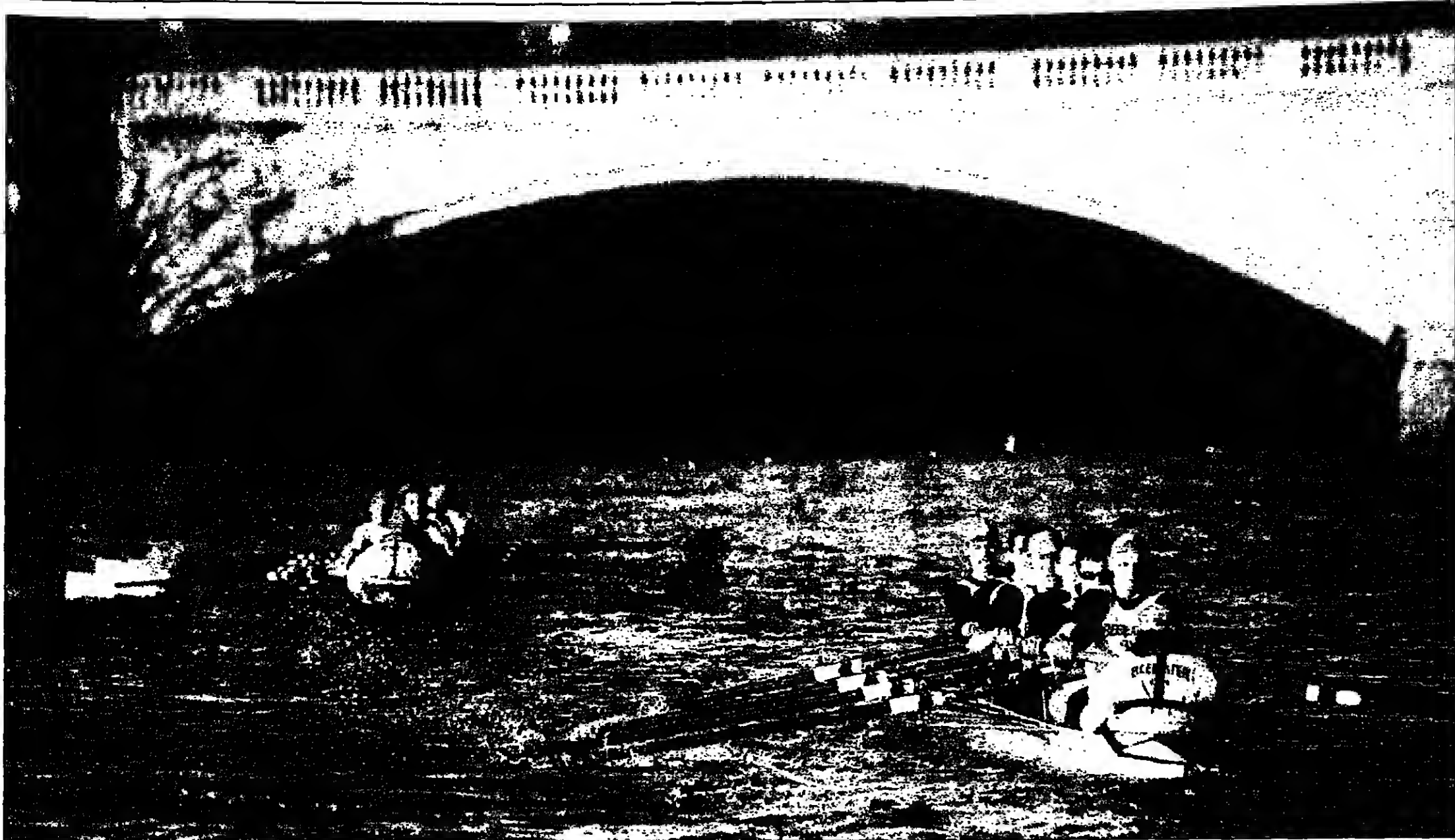
	Home										Away			Form			Upcoming matches		
	Pt	Pts	GD	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	(most recent to right)					
1	Man Utd	17	37	+30	7	1	0	20	4	4	3	2	16	9	WLWWWW	24 Dec Everton (H)	25 Dec Coventry (A)	26 Dec Blackburn (H)	27 Dec Southampton (A)
2	Chelsea	17	34	+23	6	0	1	16	6	5	1	4	25	12	WLWWWW	24 Dec Sheff Wed (A)	25 Dec Chelsea (H)	26 Dec Arsenal (H)	27 Dec Bolton (A)
3	Blackburn	17	33	+12	6	2	1	20	10	3	4	1	10	8	DLWWWW	24 Dec Bolton (A)	25 Dec Arsenal (H)	26 Dec Chelsea (H)	27 Dec Sheff Wed (A)
4	Arsenal	17	30	+13	5	2	1	18	4	3	4	2	13	8	LWLWW	24 Dec Tottenham (A)	25 Dec Arsenal (H)	26 Dec Chelsea (H)	27 Dec Bolton (A)
5	Leeds	17	30	+7	4	2	3	13	11	5	1	2	13	8	WWWWD	24 Dec Liverpool (A)	25 Dec Aston Villa (H)	26 Dec Arsenal (H)	27 Dec Bolton (A)
6	Leicester	17	27	+7	3	5	2	12	9	4	1	2	10	6	DLWDW	24 Dec Newcastle (A)	25 Dec Arsenal (H)	26 Dec Chelsea (H)	27 Dec Bolton (A)
7	Derby	16	26	+6	6	2	0	18	5	2	0	6	11	16	WLWW	24 Dec Newcastle (A)	25 Dec Arsenal (H)	26 Dec Chelsea (H)	27 Dec Bolton (A)
8	Liverpool	16	25	+10	5	0	3	19	9	2	4	2	8	8	DWLWL	24 Dec Wimbledon (H)	25 Dec Arsenal (H)	26 Dec Chelsea (H)	27 Dec Bolton (A)
9	Newcastle	15	24	-1	5	2	2	12	10	2	1	3	6	9	DWLL	24 Dec Derby (A)	25 Dec Liverpool (H)	26 Dec Chelsea (H)	27 Dec Bolton (A)
10	Wimbledon	17	22	-2	3	2	5	11	14	3	2	2	8	7	LWLWL	24 Dec Arsenal (H)	25 Dec Chelsea (H)	26 Dec Bolton (A)	27 Dec Sheff Wed (A)
11	West Ham	17	22	-4	6	0	1	16	6	1	1	6	8	22	LWLWL	24 Dec Arsenal (H)	25 Dec Chelsea (H)	26 Dec Bolton (A)	27 Dec Sheff Wed (A)
12	Aston Villa	17	21	-4	4	1	3	17	12	2	2	5	8	11	DLWLW	24 Dec Tottenham (A)	25 Dec Arsenal (H)	26 Dec Chelsea (H)	27 Dec Bolton (A)
13	Sheff Wed	17	21	-8	5	1	3	17	13	1	2	5	13	25	LWLWW	24 Dec Tottenham (A)	25 Dec Arsenal (H)	26 Dec Chelsea (H)	27 Dec Bolton (A)
14	C Palace	17	20	-5	0	3	4	5	11	5	2	3	12	11	DWLLD	24 Dec Southampton (H)	25 Dec Arsenal (H)	26 Dec Chelsea (H)	27 Dec Bolton (A)
15	Bolton	17	19	-11	3	4	1	5	3	1	3	5	8	21	LDWWL	24 Dec Barnsley (A)	25 Dec Arsenal (H)	26 Dec Chelsea (H)	27 Dec Bolton (A)
16	Coventry	17	17	-11	2	6	1	10	10	1	2	5	3	14	WDLWL	24 Dec Arsenal (H)	25 Dec Chelsea (H)	26 Dec Bolton (A)	27 Dec Sheff Wed (A)
17	Southampton	17	16	-7	4	1	4	15	13	1	0	7	5	11	WLWL	24 Dec Crystal Palace (A)	25 Dec Arsenal (H)	26 Dec Bolton (A)	27 Dec Sheff Wed (A)
18	Tottenham	17	16	-9	2	2	4	8	14	1	3	5	6	14	LLWL	24 Dec Arsenal (H)	25 Dec Chelsea (H)	26 Dec Bolton (A)	27 Dec Sheff Wed (A)
19	Everton	17	13	-11	3	1	4	11	15	0	3	6	5	14	LLLD	24 Dec Man Utd (A)	25 Dec Bolton (A)	26 Dec Chelsea (H)	27 Dec Sheff Wed (A)
20	Barnsley	17	13	-30	2	1	5	8	18	2	0	7	7	27	DLWLL	24 Dec Bolton (A)	25 Dec Derby (H)	26 Dec Chelsea (H)	27 Dec Sheff Wed (A)

FAIR PLAY LEAGUE	Unfair Play League
1 G Willard... 3 37 22 578	1 Bolton... 17 4 33 53 312
2 G Barber... 3 34 49 544	2 Everton... 17 3 37 52 306
3 M Reed... 1 33 38 543	3 Coventry... 17 3 36 51 300
4 P Durkin... 1 24 56 508	4 Chelsea... 17 3 31 48 271
5 G Pol... 1 23 35 438	5 Arsenal... 17 1 38 43 253
6 S Dunn... 1 22 32 457	6 Blackburn... 17 3 28 43 253
7 G Ashby... 1 21 36 450	7 West Ham... 17 3 24 44 244
8 M Barry... 1 20 38 422	8 Leeds... 17 1 35 40 235
9 U Rennie... 1 17 42 420	9 Sheff Wed... 17 2 28 38 224
10 J Winter... 1 16 42 420	10 Derby... 17 0 34 34 200
11 D Elery... 1 15 42 420	11 West Ham... 17 0 35 35 184
12 P Jones... 1 14 33 418	12 Liverpool... 16 1 28 31 194
13 P Alcock... 1 13 31 388	13 Newcastle... 15 1 21 25 173
14 M Rotherham... 1 12 30 375	14 Man Utd... 17 0 27 27 159
15 A Wilkie... 1 11 27 370	15 Southampton... 17 0 27 27 159
16 N Barry... 1 10 27 358	16 Tottenham... 17 1 22 27 159
17 D Gallagher... 1 10 23 330	17 Barn



SPORT

Saturday 13 December 1997



Juniper, coxed by Alistair Potts, have a winning lead as they approach Chiswick Bridge ahead of Angelica, coxed by Suzie Ellis, in Cambridge's Boat Race trial yesterday. Report, page 21; Photograph: David Ashdown

FOOTBALL

Suspended bans for Grobbelaar and Segers

Bruce Grobbelaar believes he and Hans Segers have not been "let off" by a Football Association disciplinary committee which gave them suspended bans and fines yesterday for breaking rules on betting.

The two goalkeepers, cleared of match-fixing charges earlier this year, received thousands of pounds for helping a Far East betting syndicate to predict the outcome of matches in which they were not involved.

But the FA said their punishment of a six-month ban and a £10,000 fine would be suspended for two years, given the "severe financial hardship and three-year blight on their careers" they had already suffered.

Grobbelaar and Segers, who plan to continue their careers, admitted breaching FA rules on the involvement of players in betting, but claimed they had not fully appreciated the regulations at the time.

The two, along with former Wimbledon striker John Fashanu and a Malaysian businessman, were found not guilty earlier this year of criminal charges of match fixing by a jury at Winchester Crown Court.

But in their evidence during the lengthy trial, Grobbelaar and Segers admitted giving advice to a Far East betting syndicate on the likely outcome of matches.

During yesterday's disciplinary committee hearing the FA heard that Grobbelaar had received just over £8,000 for his services, while Segers had picked up between £45,000 and £48,000.

"I've not been effectively let off - it's a serious matter," Grobbelaar said. "Had I known the penalties before, I would never have entered into the agreement with certain people. As it happened, I was naive."

He added that he would be continuing his planned libel action against the tabloid newspaper which first carried the match-fixing allegations against him.

Segers did not attend the FA's headquarters at Lancaster Gate in London, but his solicitor, Mel Goldberg, said: "He accepts the decision. He is hoping to play for Wolves on Sunday. If he keeps his nose clean, which he will, then he can carry on playing."

Grobbelaar and Segers were ordered to pay £4,000 each towards the cost of the hearing.

— Mark Bradley

CRICKET: CHAMPIONS' TROPHY

England next as Lara gets back on the runway

The West Indies may be in turmoil, but they proved too good for Pakistan yesterday. Derek Pringle, in Sharjah, saw them regain some self-respect after a humiliating Test-series defeat.

When great dynasties fall, they can do so with either a whimper or a bang. Last week, when 15 years of West Indies domination was unequivocally ended in Karachi, with their first series whitewash for 69 years, the resort was heard all around the cricketing world.

Australia may have been the first team to show the West Indies they were mortal, but Pakistan have been the first to

show them what it is like to wake up wearing paupers' rags.

It may not last, for few, save South Africa, have been able to rival Pakistan on their own hard-baked soil. Nevertheless, humiliation is not a word that has been in the Caribbean vocabulary since Australia thrashed them in 1974-75, and they are not taking kindly to it with.

Confronted with a fragile batting line-up and an ageing

bowling attack, old inter-island squabbles, buried during the heady years of domination, have returned.

Courtney Walsh, the current but by no means established captain, admitted that many would probably consider the West Indies second favourites to England when their Caribbean tour begins next month.

"I know a lot of people have written us off already," he said.

"But the series will be good for us and I'm looking forward to it. It will be a great test of character to prove to people that one bad tour is not the end of us."

A consummate professional, as well as a decent man, Walsh's tether has recently been tested more by his own than by any opponent. Denying that there is a split between him and Brian Lara, Walsh pledged himself, if selected, to play against England irrespective of who was captain. Ironically, his chances of retaining the job will probably rest on the outcome of today's one-day match against England.

However, if Adam Hoggins' one-day specialists were perhaps expected to put another nail in the coffin of West Indies cricket, yesterday's match against Pakistan in the Champions' Trophy, revealed that the corpse, far from being laid out, is sitting bolt upright.

Aided and abetted by a lamentable fielding performance from Wasim Akram's team, the

West Indies batting, recently vilified by team manager Clive Lloyd, looked a different outfit. It helps when Lara returns to something near his best, but there were still signs that West Indies' unimpressive brand of cricket, particularly their pace bowling, is ill-suited to the shorter game.

Mind you, there is not much a cove can do when Shahid Afridi, Pakistan's teenage pinch-hitter, keeps clearing the ropes and opening bowler Franklyn Rose will have found last night's learning process particularly painful.

Lara has been having a lean time of it with the bat and when he first came in yesterday, he ducked and scratched about like a newly-hatched chick. What was plain is that he needed to stick at the crease.

As the overs went by the precision and the audacious power returned in spectacular fashion. Like Sachin Tendulkar in England's first match, Lara had little trouble in middling the

ball as it got soft - a source of great problems to many - and his 88 took just 80 balls, including three sixes.

Only Saqlain Mushtaq troubled him and his unique off-spin is as alchemic as Mushtaq Ahmed's wrist-spin. Unless they plan to get him out early, England will have to ensure their batting does not fall away, as it did against India.

Playing half a dozen all-rounders is fruitless if they are going to play like tail-enders and Hoggins may be better off playing another specialist bowler. It may be something he is forced to do if Mark Ealham's shoulder, hurt while fielding against India, has not cleared up.

Another conundrum that Wednesday's win over India threw up is where best to bat Graham Thorpe. Being a batsman who is brilliant at working the ball into gaps, Thorpe needs to go in earlier rather than later. He should have gone in at No 4 instead of Graeme Hick, who struggled to return the strike to Alec Stewart.

With England deliberately picking a young mobile side it was perhaps ironic that Wednesday's top performers, Stewart and Matthew Fleming, were the senior citizens of the side.

At 34 and 33 respectively, both could be feeling the strain by the time the World Cup comes around in 18 months time. At the moment though, both are showing the younger players just exactly what it takes to compete at this level, something that Walsh's endeavours apart, has not been happening for the West Indies.

Winning women, page 21

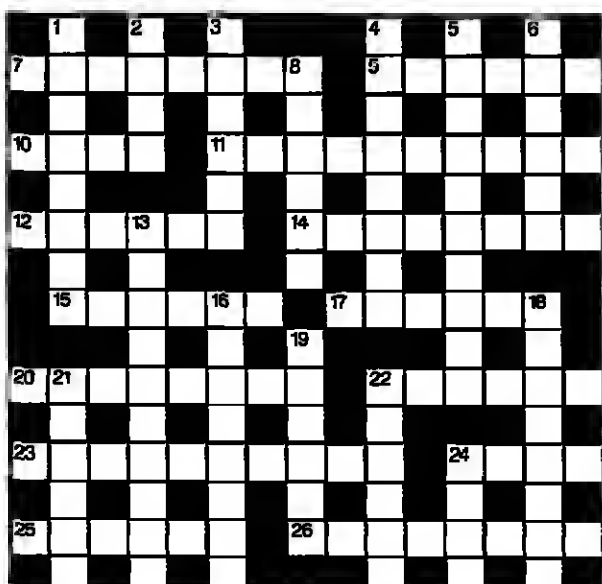
THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3481, Saturday 13 December

By Mass

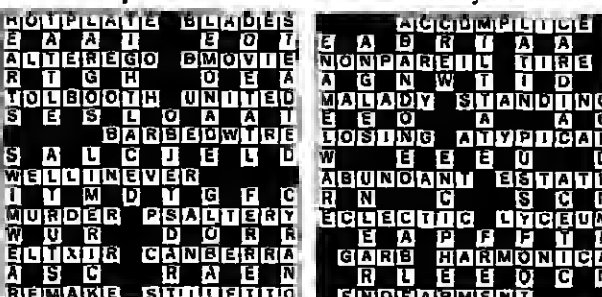
ACROSS

DOWN



Friday's solution

Last Saturday's solution



- 7 Ladle's out, in vessel, required for service (6,2)
- 9 Diverted, one day, around Mull? (6)
- 10 Rift with fellow canon (4)
- 11 Vehicle for theatrical director (10)
- 12 Pianist's musical when beard with part of key (6)
- 14 Spoon one found in cold mug (8)
- 15 Plant with yellow character died (6)
- 17 Attentive, but missing American scene of shooting (6)
- 20 Rotund property? (5,3)
- 22 File to trim round plug (6)
- 23 A factor likely to disrupt a case (10)
- 24 Charge for measure of drink (4)
- 25 Decline grant again? (6)
- 26 Rashly insures about 500 and odd articles (8)

- 1 Goofy bobo injected with friend's type (8)
- 2 Stroke negotiating shallow bend round lake (4)
- 3 Was he always on the make? (6)
- 4 Fruit for girl building up a quantity of wine (8)
- 5 Shot (but not cricket) (3,2,5)
- 6 Mostly brass one the European drawer (6)
- 8 Fish, flat one consumed (6)
- 13 Artful type's making best pot (4,6)
- 16 Find rare forms sensitive to radiation (8)
- 18 Twists, taking chances accepting one draw (8)
- 19 Pales from Sunday drinks (6)
- 21 Unaccustomed, being new (6)
- 22 Reduction in pop band (6)
- 24 Imperial, but not English, poet? (4)

The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday receive hardbacked copies of the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations. Answers and winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to Saturday Crossword, P.O. Box 4018, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5SL. Please use the box number and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners: J Butterfield, Poole; P Berrington, Liverpool; K Mitchell, Grimsby; 1 Mornet, Croydon; D Venham, Dorchester.

SHARJAH SCOREBOARD

West Indies won toss	
WEST INDIES	PAKISTAN
P A Wallace c Karam b Saqlain 32	Saqlain c Lara b Rose 17
S C Williams c Wasim b Shahid 77	Shahid c Lara b Rose 17
S C Lara c Azhar b Wasim 38	Saqlain c Lara b Rose 17
C L Hooper c Akram b Saqlain 22	Azhar c Lara b Rose 17
P V Simmons c Akram b Saqlain 22	Wasim c Lara b Rose 17
S Chanderpaul not out 18	Shahid c Lara b Rose 17
F A Rose b Wasim 2	Azhar c Lara b Rose 17
10 Williams c and b Wasim 0	Shahid c Lara b Rose 17
R N Lewis not out 1	Saqlain c Lara b Rose 17
Extras (b1, w2, nb1) 20	Wasim c Lara b Rose 17
Total (for 7, 50 overs) 275	Saqlain c Lara b Rose 17
Fell: 1-21, 2-103, 3-217, 4-243, 5-266, 6-271, 7-271.	Saqlain c Lara b Rose 17
Did not bat: M V Dillon, C A Walsh.	Saqlain c Lara b Rose 17
Bowling: Wasim Akram 10-0-82-3; Wasim Younis 10-0-53-0; Saqlain Mushtaq 10-0-35-3; Azhar Mahmood 10-0-81-0; Shahid Afridi 10-0-57-1.	Saqlain c Lara b Rose 17

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Saturday 13 December 1997

Registered as a newspaper with the Post Office

The best of all is this

John Wesley

for it is written

Lake

صباح الخير



YOUR MONEY

PERSONAL FINANCE, PROPERTY & MOTORING

Saturday 13 December 1997

Suspended
bans for
Grobbelaar
and Segers



Shelf life: new house, no shelves, big expense. Having somewhere to stack your books and line up your knick-knacks is one of those details you could overlook when moving, but there are solutions, as Rosalind Russell shows on page 10. You could try something a little exotic like these shelves built into a mock double bass. This is one of a selection of musically themed shelves which are made of fibreboard by Instrumental Furniture in London. Photograph: Andrew Burman

Looking for a punt with a pint

Pronto, a new lottery game for pubs, is already under threat of a Government ban - but how do your chances of winning compare with its more established rivals? Paul Slade plays the numbers game.

If you want to buy into the full dream, then the National Lottery remains the only game in town.

Only Dale Winton, Carol Smiley and their toothsome ilk can provide the multi-million pound sums you would need to quit your job, buy a Ferrari and catch the next first-class flight to Barbados. Your own chance of winning the jackpot - or even sharing one - may be astonishingly small, but that doesn't stop people dreaming.

The biggest prize on offer from Pronto for a £1 stake is £25,000, which comes your way if all the 10 computer-selected numbers on every Pronto tick-etaire among the 20 numbers drawn. On average, this will happen once for every £2m you hand across the bar.

Lucky Choice, an offshoot of the Irish Lottery which you play in UK bookmakers, offers payouts of up to £69,491 for a £1 stake, although this depends on a complex combination of bets coming right. The maximum Lucky Choice payout on any stake is £100,000.

All the games work on a slightly different basis, and both Pronto and Lucky Choice can be played in a number of different ways. This makes direct com-

parisons difficult. The one thing you can be sure of is that you will almost certainly lose more money than you win.

The fact that Pronto will be carrying out hundreds of draws every day, plus the fact that it is played where people are drinking, has prompted Home Office Minister George Howarth to suggest legislation banning the game could be in place as early as next summer.

Pronto
Method: The game is played in 2,000 pubs round the UK, where electronic terminals take your tickets and TV screens show the results of a new draw every five or 10 minutes. You can select two, three, four or five numbers from a field of 80.

Twenty winning numbers are drawn. As with the National Lottery, the precise amount you win will depend on the total amount staked in that particular draw. Operator: Inter Lotto

Percentage of take paid out in prizes: 55.4 per cent
Percentage of take donated to charity: 20 per cent

Estimated payouts on £1 stake (assuming players select five-number game)

Correct nos selected	Payout	Odds
One	Nil	N/A
Two	Nil	N/A
Three	£1	12 to 1
Four	£15	83 to 1
Five	£500	1,550 to 1
Ten	£25,000	1.89m to 1

Source: Inter Lotto.
Computer-selected bonus numbers appear on every ticket.

Fascinating Fact: Inter Lotto chairman Lord Mancroft is also chairman of the Addiction Recovery Foundation (*Who's Who* 1997).

Lucky Choice

Method: A fixed-odds game, based on the Irish Lottery, which can be played in UK bookmakers. You can select up to six numbers from a field of 42. Six numbers, plus a bonus ball are drawn, twice a week, on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Results are shown in betting shops and on Channel 4 Teletext (p601). The bookmakers do not buy Irish Lottery tickets on your behalf, but use the numbers drawn to determine who wins. Operator: Major UK bookmakers.

Percentage of take paid out in prizes: The total percentage returned as prizes depends on how many players have placed winning bets in that particular draw, and will be different with every draw made.

Percentage of take donated to charity: Nil.

Payouts on £1 stake, assuming players select numbers in a Canadian as part of the six number draw*

Correct Payout	Odds	Nb included
One	nil	n/a
Two	£42	57 to 1
Three	£548	574 to 1
Four	£6,036	78,765 to 1
Five	£69,491	141,778 to 1

Source: Ladbrokes

* The six number draw offers higher payouts, but ignores the bonus ball. † This means your Canadian includes 10 two-number combinations, each of which has a 57 to 1 chance of coming up.

Fascinating Fact: A Canadian (also known as a Super Yankee) is a combination of 26 bets, all based on the same five numbers. If all five numbers come up, you have 10 doubles, 10 trebles, five four-folds and one five-fold.

UK National Lottery

Method: The game is played live on BBC television twice a week, on Wednesdays and Saturdays, with tickets available from outlets all over the UK. Players pick six numbers from a field of 49. Six winning numbers and a bonus ball are drawn.

Operator: Camelot.
Percentage of take paid out in prizes: 50.6 per cent
Percentage of take paid to charity: 28 per cent goes to the good causes.

Estimated payouts on £1 stake, based on average National Lottery payouts so far.

Correct nos selected	Payout	Odds against
One	Nil	N/A
Two	Nil	N/A
Three	£10	56 to 1
Four	£64	1,032 to 1
Five	£1,564	55,491 to 1
Five + bonus	£104,388	2.3m to one
Six	£1.85m	13.9m to 1

Source: Camelot
Fascinating Fact: Once the £10 prizes are settled, 52 per cent of the remaining prize fund is devoted to jackpot winners.

Thought for the day

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Christmas.
And an
even more
prosperous
new year.

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Grade I eyesores
12/JOHN WINTER
Revs up against Brussels

A high-contrast, black and white photograph of a man with glasses sitting in a chair, smiling. He is wearing a dark sweater. In the background, another person is standing near a doorway, and a dog is visible on the floor.

Photograph: Will Walker

You profit from our principles

هكذا من الأصل

3/PERSONAL FINANCE

THE INDEPENDENT
SATURDAY 13 DECEMBER 1997
▼ 3

is that won't
ur wealth

INTERNET INVESTOR

Net a return from electronic tracking



ROBIN AMLÖT

By now you will have had a chance to digest the reaction to the Government's announcement on Individual Savings Accounts (ISAs). If you want to check for yourself exactly what the proposals contain, you can view the consultative document on ISAs on the Inland Revenue's website. Further Government comment is available on the Treasury website. Of course, the ISA is still 15 months away, leaving Tassas and PEPs as the main tax-efficient savings available to everybody. In fact, even if you don't yet have a personal equity plan it is still worth starting one now. Try not to be seduced by the kind of advertising which suggests you should: "Buy now, while stocks last!" But what sort of PEP should you have?

It is all too easy to become completely submerged in conflicting claim and counter-claim of performance. Here is some food for thought: the annual fees charged by the average fund manager can swallow as much as 33 per cent of a unit trust PEP's income. This means the income tax saving made by investing in a PEP may be wiped out by the annual charges alone.

It has been said many times that an index tracker fund should form the core of a private investor's portfolio. However, only one of the various tracker funds on offer has taken advantage of the Internet and the savings it can offer in terms of costs and administration, netPEP.

netPEP tracks the FTSE 100 index through a unit trust managed by the world's leading tracking fund managers, Barclays Global Investors. Since its launch in April, the netPEP Tracker Fund has risen by around 16 per cent, broadly in line with the performance of the FTSE 100 over the same period.

Among the advantages of investing on the Internet through netPEP is the ability to value your investment at any time just by logging on to the service. Although netPEP keeps in contact with regular e-mail communications, important documents such as confirmation of units purchased are sent by post.

Once you invest, netPEP sends you a confidential password and user name so that you can check your portfolio's value over the Internet and access netPEP's investor information service. This offers information on the companies in the portfolio, including links to their websites and a forum where you can, for example, put forward questions you want raised at company meetings.

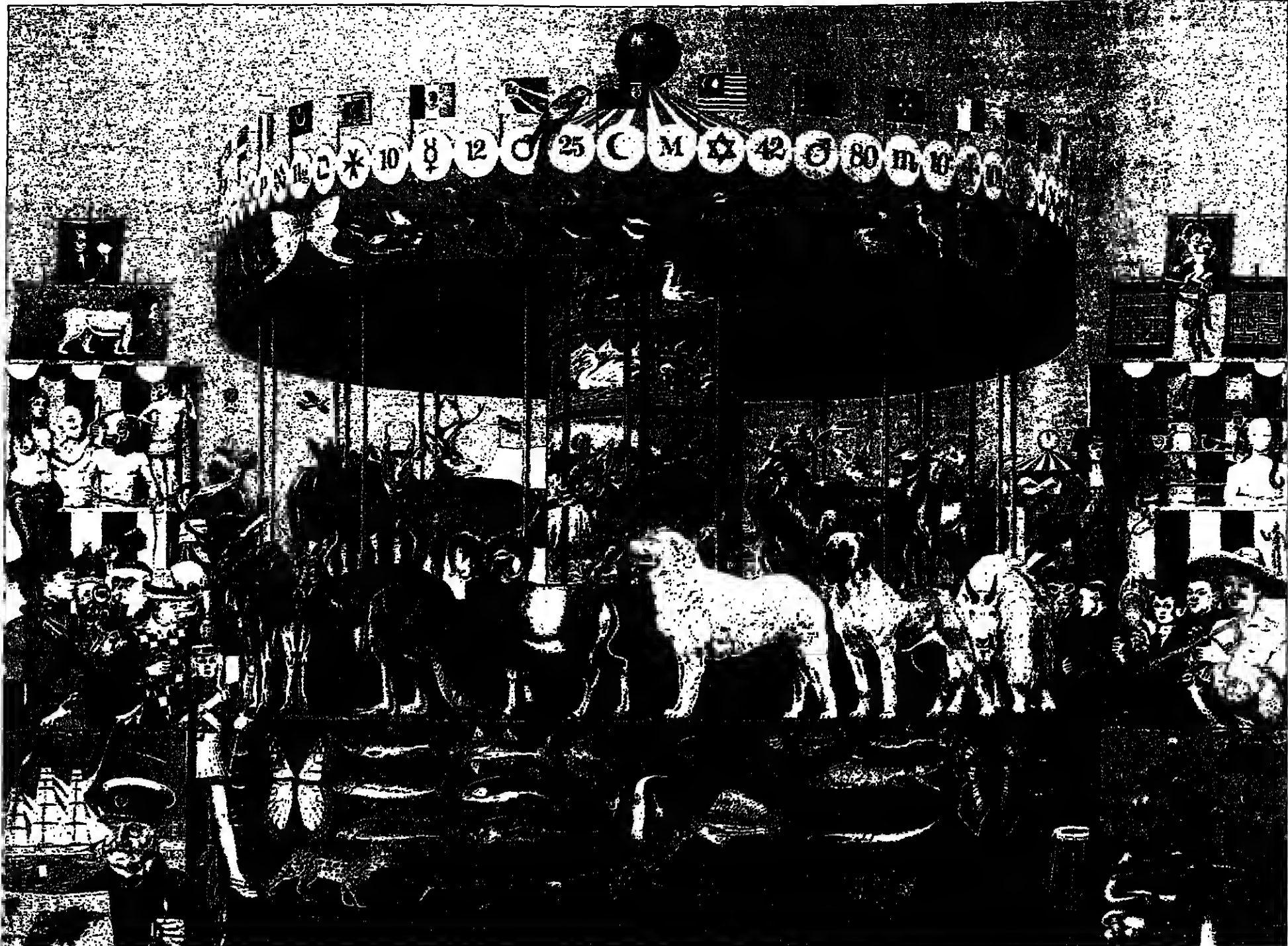
You have the option of investing in netPEP via a new PEP, the transfer of an existing PEP or directly into the unit trust. There is an initial 1 per cent charge and the annual management fee is 0.35 per cent, making netPEP among the cheapest of the tracker funds on the market. The 1 per cent initial charge is waived on all investments of £25,000 or more. The minimum investment in either a PEP or the unit trust is a £1,000 lump sum or monthly savings of £250.

Although netPEP offers its application form online, it does not accept applications by e-mail. Once you have filled in the form, you must print it, sign it and return it to them by post, either with a cheque or a direct-debit mandate.

As a Christmas come-on, netPEP is waiving its initial charge for all PEP transfers until 31 December. This means investors transferring to netPEP will only be charged the annual fee of 0.35 per cent or £3.50 for every £1,000 invested, making it the cheapest PEP on the market.

In addition to the netPEP itself, the netPEP website offers *Tr@cker*, a monthly on-line magazine providing analysis and commentary on the FTSE 100 index. Among the articles in the latest issue are a review of the current shape of the UK stock market and commentaries on the South-east Asian economies and the lessons of the crash of 1997. The magazine's regular features include a monthly commentary and price and performance information about the netPEP itself.

Inland Revenue: www.open.gov.uk/inrev
Treasury: www.hm-treasury.gov.uk
netPEP: www.netPEP.co.uk



M is for money: Mike Wilks' 'The Letter M' is priced at £7,000. His work, 'The Ultimate Alphabet' has the distinction of being the most shop-lifted title from WH Smith

The drawing power of children's fiction

A drawing of Pooh, Piglet and Robin fetched £69,000 at Christie's in July; last year a Beatrix Potter made £17,150. John Windsor finds that collectors of children's book illustrations are not playing with pocket money.

Whatever happened to Piglet's stick? In 1928, when EH Shepherd first drew Piglet and Pooh sitting on a gate singing the tiddly-pom song, for AA Milne's book *The House At Pooh Corner*, he gave them both sticks, like batons.

But the drawing of his that was being offered by Christie's South Kensington this week, estimated £12,000-£18,000, showed Piglet with no stick.

The answer to the riddle is that Shepherd insisted on selling his drawings, so that when the publishers Methuen, decided in 1958 to make new printing blocks for a new edition of *The House At Pooh Corner*, they had to ask Shepherd to draw new pictures. It was then that, for reasons we shall never know, Shepherd confiscated Piglet's stick.

The same year, the new, stickless drawing sold for 3 guineas at Foyles Art Gallery. Similar Shepherd drawings were sold for the same pocket-money price.

Collectors of children's book illustration would fight more fiercely over the original drawing, with stick.

than the later version. But Christie's South Kensington's Inken Haldane tells me she catalogues illustrations strictly according to quality – the later, stickless Shepherd, for example, was "clear-cut, sharp, superbly done" – instead of according to edition, or whether the picture was published at all.

From the auctioneer's point of view, she explained, a well-known artist does not need evidence of publication in order to establish provenance.

But connoisseurs value more highly an illustration that has been published and pored over by countless tiny fingers, generating nostalgia.

The pencil and watercolour of two girls under cherry blossom by the illustrator Kate Greenway (1846-1901), in the same sale, looks like a book illustration, but no book is identified in the catalogue. Greenway was so prolific that it would take all but a connoisseur half a day of rummaging in the British Library to find out whether her painting was ever published.

If it could be sourced to a book, the £1,000-£1,500 estimate might not change, but the bidding for it would be more enthusiastic. Sketches of Eeyore and Chums, dashed off by Shepherd for admirers and not rated by today's connoisseurs, can still be picked up for under £500.

Not that children's book illustration is a market hurtingling with connoisseurs: many auction purchases end up framed

on nursery walls, for the delectation of doting adults. "Yes, it's the original, actually."

An EH Shepherd of Pooh, Piglet and Robin playing Pooh sticks, fetched £69,000 at Christie's South Kensington in July. There's nostalgia for you. A Beatrix Potter fetched £17,150 there last year.

Investors in search of winning formulas might calculate that illustrations with the most adult appeal – such as the flowing, rather sexy Art Nouveau-ish lines of Arthur Rackham (1867-1939) and Edmund Dulac (1882-1953) – would attract the broadest market and the highest prices. But toddlers never hid at auction. If it sells, it's adult stuff. Ms Haldane thinks that illustrations of toys and animals have more staying power than fictional characters that speak because there's more scope for fantasising about them.

As it happens, the markets for Rackham and Dulac have peaked while the furry creatures of Beatrix Potter and the top furry creatures of EH Shepherd go from strength to strength. Power, of course, was an established illustration before turning to children's books.

Bonhams, the London auctioneers, are making their debut in the children's book illustration market on Tuesday (11am) – South Ken have been holding dedicated sales for a decade – and have as their consultant Mike Heseltine, who founded the auction market for children's illustration while on the staff of Sotheby's, 20 years ago.

His records confirm that prices for Rackham and Dulac peaked around 1985. A Dulac watercolour of *Eugenie and the Nightingale* sold for £26,400 in 1985, but could manage only £32,190 at Sotheby's in October this year.

Similarly, Greenway prices have levelled off after peaking in the mid-Eighties. Hence his modest estimate of £600-£800 in next week's sale for an original Greenway pictorial border for September in the Almanack for 1891, showing five girls with baskets of flowers.

Proof of the unpredictability of the market is the sensational prices fetched by over 300 Noddy pictures by Harrysen Van Der Beek at Sotheby's Blyth centenary sale in October. They raised £359,631, 95.42 per cent being sold by value.

Mr Heseltine says: "You never know when an artist is going to take off or reach a plateau."

Britain is pre-eminent in living children's book illustrators. They are a canny lot. They either sit on their pictures, refusing to sell, or hufffoot it to the London gallery of Chris Beetles, the *ne plus ultra* of dealers in original illustrations, who gets the best prices.

An exception is fantasy artist Mike Wilks, a 50-year-old south Londoner whose closely packed acrylics have a compulsive appeal for both children and adults – his *The Ultimate Alphabet* (1986) sold a quarter of a million copies and was WH Smith's most shop-lifted title.

Mr Heseltine and Sir Tim Rice, Andrew Lloyd Webber's librettist, have both written introductions to the catalogue of Wilks' current one-man show at the Gekoski Gallery – a sudden sell-off of his works, hoarded over a lifetime. Wilks' *The Letter M*, from *The Ultimate Alphabet*, is priced £7,000. Prices for other acrylics range from £3,500 to £15,000.

Even more perplexing than Wilks' conundrums is Mr Heseltine's listing of the new generation of illustrators who heard their work: Nicola Bayley, Roger Dean, Patrick Woodroffe, Kit Williams. Back in 1981, he sold a tiny Bayley's picture of a mouse for £350 at Sotheby's. He last sold a Woodroffe 10 years ago.

The big contemporary names on sale at Chris Beetles' are Quentin Blake and Michael Foreman – who are both art-school trained. Blake used to be head of the illustration department at the RCA and Foreman has lectured widely at London art schools.

In Beetles' current show, there are some of Blake's snappy, throw-away ink drawings for £750-£1,450 and technically accomplished Foreman watercolours for £980-£1,150. But if you want to buy from Mr Heseltine's list of uncommercial artists, you will have to doorstep them.

Mike Wilks, enured by appointment at the Gekoski Gallery, Pied Bull Yard, 15a Bloomsbury Square, London WC1 (0171-404 6676). Chris Beetles, *The Illustrators*, 8 & 10 Ryder Street, St James's, London SW1 (0171-839 7551).

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BRIAN TORA

Was it not Dr Schumacher who preached "small is beautiful"? He should see us in the City now. The dash for critical mass is positively breathtaking. And critical mass means size. It seems that these days you have to be a global player in almost everything if you are to count at all.

Fund management is the latest part of the financial services business to embrace the new paradigm. Since Merrill Lynch sought to devour our No 1 independent fund management group - Mercury Asset Management - it seems the pace is hotting up. PDM seems set to be put together with the Swiss Bank Corporation's investment management business, while Gartmore has already fallen to National Westminster Bank. Only Schroders, of the top four pension fund managers, retains its independent status. Lower down the rankings, LGT is up for sale. Even \$40bn under management is viewed as not enough to play with the big boys. No wonder that Newton, with a bare £10bn of funds looked after on behalf of clients, is seeking a partner. Big - beautiful? You'd better believe it.

The big four - Mercury, PDM, Gartmore and Schroders - dominate pension fund management in this country. According to its marketing material, Mercury looks after 50 of the Top 100 British companies, at least in part. Yet all of these businesses have found it difficult to extend beyond these shores. Britain is, in fact, a large and relatively sophisticated pond in which to fish. But even a big local pond is insufficient these days. Moreover, with more and more money moving into indexed portfolios, you need that lit-

tle extra to persuade investors you provide real added-value.

Size has not been considered as quite so important in the retail market, but this could change too. Unit trusts received a much needed fillip from the PEP market, but the introduction of ISAs will limit the help these tax-efficient vehicles can provide. We may soon see the urge to merge among retail providers.

Now, I would not necessarily preach the size gospel, but you can see what is happening on the global stage. America dominates global financial services. The strength of its own market gives it an advantage that no other nation is likely to match. Europe could come close - hence the flurry of deals on the Continent, but whether investors will get a better deal as a consequence is a very moot point indeed.

In the end, the larger an investment group becomes, the more its investment freedom becomes restricted. I watch developments with interest and hope that a good manager with a clever idea will never find it impossible to set up a new, independent company.

Meantime, Asian contagion rears its head again. Not only does the IMF bullet-for Korea look inadequate, there is no sign its government has grasped the nettle. Moreover, the effects on world trade have yet to be seen.

Next year is unlikely to be as profitable as 1997 which delivered a level of profitability few could have foreseen. The new year may contain just as many surprises for us, though.

Brian Tora is Chairman of the Greig Middleton Investment Strategy Committee

STOCK MARKET GUIDE: THE P/E RATIO

The tool investors can use to determine a company's potential for growth



A company's p/e could be described as the City's confidence ratio in that share

Photograph: AP

Rating a share's prospects is not easy. But one common yardstick reveals the market's view. John Andrew continues his series on the share page with an explanation of the price-earnings ratio.

The penultimate column on *The Independent's* share page is headed "P/E", the abbreviation for "price-earnings ratio" - one of the traditional tools used to assess whether a share is worthwhile. "It is widely quoted, but little understood," says Gill Nott, the chief executive of ProShare, the organisation which promotes share ownership.

The p/e ratio is a simple concept. It is calculated by dividing the company's current share price by earnings per share over the last 12 months. Earnings per share must not be confused with dividends. The latter is the income distributed to shareholders. On the other hand, earnings per share generally refers to the net profit after the deduction of the dividend payable on preference shares. These are shares which pay a fixed dividend to shareholders each year.

The ratio indicates how many years it would take for the net profit attributable to each share to equal the current share price. As a rule, the higher the p/e, the more "expensive" the share. It may also be viewed as the City's confidence ratio. Generally, the higher the p/e, the higher the market's regard for the company.

A high p/e could indicate the com-

pany's performance is bounding ahead of its most recently published earnings. In other words, investors are expecting increased profits to be announced and consequently the shares are in demand. Investors are prepared to pay a higher price now that reflects better things in the future. Of course, only time will reveal whether this is a correct judgement.

On the other hand, a company which is doing badly may have a high p/e. This reflects the view that it may be the subject of a takeover bid. Even the whiff of a possible bid can increase a company's share price.

Glancing down the p/e column in our share price page, you will notice that there are one or two gaps. This is because in these cases, such factors as taxation, income distribution or objectives, makes the ratio meaningless or irrelevant.

The p/e ratio for a particular company can differ from one publication to another. For example, the ratios in *The Independent's* newsletter differ from those in a stockbroker's newsletter. The reason for such differences is that although the concept of the ratio is simple, one of the factors in its calculation is complex.

The current share price is a matter of fact. The differences arise because of the figure used for "earnings per share". There are three basic ways of defining earnings: the net; the net and the maximum methods. An explanation of the three methods, which centre on how the payment of dividends affects a company's mainstream tax, is complex and it is

sufficient for our purposes to say that each one produces a different result.

There is another reason as to why differences in the p/e calculations can differ. The development of UK fiscal law over recent years has resulted in tax provisions being more subjective than in the past. If adjustments are made, for whatever reason, to the figures supplied by the company, variations in p/e ratios will arise.

It is also worth noting that often a prospective p/e ratio is given in stockbrokers' newsletters or press comment. This simply means an estimate of the company's future earnings per share has been used in the calculations as opposed to the last published or historic earnings.

Sometimes you will see a reference to a particular p/e ratio being "undemanding". This means that the ratio is low compared with similar companies. In other words, the company's growth potential is not considered to be high. As it is easier for a company to miss high growth expectations than ones which are low, the p/e is said to be undemanding.

Remember that if a company has a high p/e ratio, it is no guarantee that the future will live up to expectations. The market's confidence may be completely misplaced. Furthermore, two companies may have identical p/es based on present earnings, but one may have far better prospects than the other.

The p/e is only one of the yardsticks that professional use when assessing shares. Investors certainly should not use it in isolation when making their decisions. We will take a look at more investment yardsticks next week.

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The deal: Put a minimum of £100 a month, or a £1,000 lump sum, into a PEP with Framlington and take your choice of two ranges of investment trusts. At least a quarter of your money must go into four trusts run by Framlington investing in the UK. The rest can go into one of a range of seven trusts run by other investment managers, to cash in on prospects in Europe, the Far East and Japan.

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very reasonably, is only asking for 25 per cent. This means that three-quarters of the money invested can be put with other managers, lessening the investor's exposure to the risk that Framlington's managers might underperform.

Investors willing to take a small risk are well-served by the international trusts run by other managers such as Schroder, Foreign & Colonial, Fleming and Edinburgh. According to Jayne Caudle, an adviser at the London-based Clark Conway partnership, "these are not middle of the road funds". The risk could carry a

higher reward - and the names are trusted. Drawbacks and risks: Withdraw your investment from an investment trust built into this PEP and it will cost you 1 per cent of your investment - no matter when you withdraw. This could amount to more than the normal initial charge, which has been wiped from this product. In contrast to most unit trusts, this could eliminate the benefit of the reasonable annual management fee of just 1 per cent. However, other charges are also low. Verdict: Very suitable for the risk-lover. Marks out of five: Four.

LOOSE CHANGE

Contents insurance premiums are still holding steady for the majority of homeowners, according to insurance brokers Premium Search, with 62 per cent enjoying a price freeze or fall in the second half of 1997, compared with 70 per cent in the first half of the year. Costs in most areas came down although there were some isolated increases especially for retired couples in bungalows, traditionally the lowest priced category. Rates should remain steady into next year.

Borrowers are tending to consolidate their debts and concentrate on a single lender in response to the 1.25 per cent rise in base rates this year, says Colonial Financial Services. The number of personal loan customers who consolidated their existing debts rose 27 per cent over the past year.

More than 15 million people will make a New Year's resolution, half of them financial, according to a survey for IFA Promotion, but only a quarter of the total will keep it. Almost half the financial resolutions involve saving up for specific items such as a car or holiday, a quarter intend to spend less money and a fifth want to clear outstanding debts.

New year resolutions should remember to submit their tax return by the deadline of 31 January to avoid an automatic penalty of £100, say chartered accountants Clark Whitehill. The end of January is also

the deadline for paying outstanding tax bills in order to avoid interest.

Interest rates on National Savings Income Bonds, Investment Accounts and the Treasurer's Account went up this week. The top rate on income bonds went up from 6.45 per cent to 7 per cent yesterday and will rise again to 7.25 per cent on 8 January.

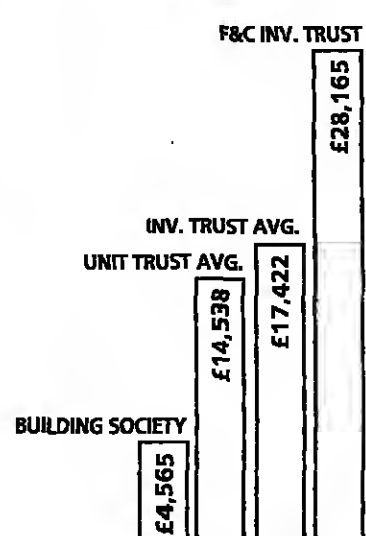
London-based letting agents Ludlow Thompson are offering a free guide to investment in residential property. Copies are available from Freeport London E1 8BR or call 01233-211551.

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صكنا من الامم

Dividing the spoils of divorce

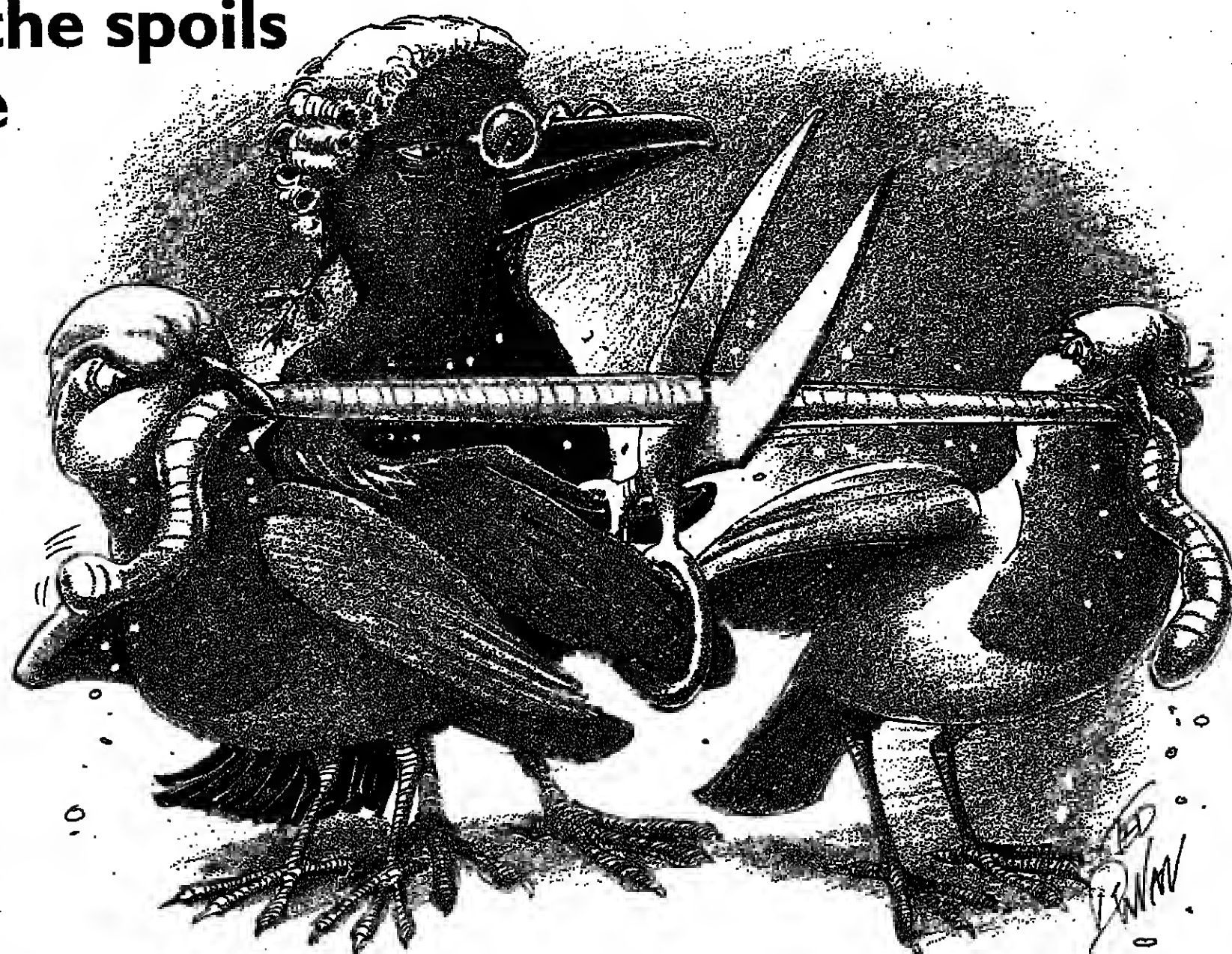
A peak of divorce petitions typically begins after the Christmas break. Traumatic enough in itself, the task of dividing the worldly goods can bring its own problems. Gwenda Joyce-Brophy points out the pitfalls.

Perhaps the glaring antithesis of the marriage to the happy image omnipresent at Christmas becomes just too painfully obvious. Or the elongated seasonal break forces an already fragile structure to fracture irrevocably, but as the crowds rush to the January sales, solicitors have come to expect their own queues – of those instigating divorce.

The current situation is one of "all change". When the Family Law Act of 1996 is fully implemented (probably not until around 1999) arrangements over finance will need to be resolved before a divorce is granted. North of the border, family and divorce law remains distinct, and the Family Law (Scotland) Act sets out principles to guide the courts in making financial orders.

Meanwhile, Mr and Mrs K, from London, in their thirties with a child at private school, have joined the seasonal surge. There is a family home – with a mortgage – one private car, one company car, a portfolio of shares, one joint and two individual bank accounts, a number of insurance policies, plus modest savings accounts. Mr K pays into a private pension scheme. Mrs K has no fund of her own. Like many couples they have built up their own particular financial profile of debts and assets. Mrs K feels particularly vulnerable, not just regarding pension provision, but since she also feels less at ease with matters financial.

One course of action is to enlist specialist services. Hill Martin Financial Management, for example, have a Matrimonial Litigation Support Service, which offers independent advice tailored to the individual – including their lifestyle and risk profile. But is this a luxury, the preserve of the super-rich? "Absolutely not," says the group's Mark Ormerod, who suggests a threshold figure of around £100,000 in assets. An initial no-cost meeting analyses a client's situation, and



a fixed fee is quoted. Duplication is not an issue. "We are not in the role of solicitors, nor do we get involved in negotiation," says Mr Ormerod. For example, if some of the share portfolio is in Mr K's name alone, and Mrs K suspects that her husband is attempting to dispose of them, advice and action would strictly be the domain of her solicitor. "Our role is to assist the client clarify the current situation – and to plan ahead. As the divorce progresses from the pre to the post-settlement stage priorities evolve to making the best of the settlement – and

adjusting to the financial constraints imposed by it," adds Ormerod. "We can also attempt to minimise the tax consequences of longer-term decisions."

Such groups will have a team of specialists in different areas, with the most appropriate drawn on as required. In essence they, plus your solicitor, form a temporary, complementary team that specialises on your particular case. Indeed, many solicitors who feel out of their depth in the murky waters of pension valuation have themselves been utilizing the services

of organisations like Hill Martin. Other organisations who will perform valuations include the Divorce Corporation (for other "professionals") and the Society of Pension Consultants.

Pension valuation remains an issue not yet satisfactorily resolved in the larger, ongoing story of pensions in divorce. Pensions can be the major asset when equity in property is low. (In Scotland things are simpler, a spouse is entitled to a share of the contribution made only during the marriage.) Current regulations define the value of

a pension as the "cash equivalent transfer value" – equivalent of how much a pension scheme holder would be paid if they were to transfer the money from the current to another pension fund, although, according to Helen Carlick, author of *The Which? Guide to Divorce*, this valuation method can under-shoot the real value, especially of occupational (as opposed to personal) pensions. Courts can now " earmark " – set aside – a share of a spouse's pension. Counter to the concept of a clean break, there are problems too with the death of the pension-scheme

member pre-retirement, or the remarriage of either partner. A system of compensation is often preferred, and while a judge cannot get into the pension fund itself, he does have the power to redistribute other assets.

Well and good in theory, but financial constraints can mean that no money is actually available. Pension splitting (the allocated pension share remains in the scheme) has its own supporters, including lobby group Fairshares among others, but the debate continues, and it is not presently an option.

Finally, if the division of any of the assets becomes too fraught during the negotiations, mediation, where participants are encouraged to make informed decisions and negotiate agreement, may be a way out of an impasse.

• Bone up with specialist publications: *The Which? Guide to Divorce* has chapters on 'Financial Planning for Divorce', 'Money in Divorce' and 'Pensions', and on the situation in Scotland. £10.99 p&hp free, call 0800 252100. *The Finance of Divorce*, by Peter Vaines, publisher Pan, £6.99.

• A checklist of assets is a good way of getting organised – include property, vehicles, valuables, occupational pensions, superannuation or personal plans; any compensation paid for having been mis-sold a pension; current and savings bank or building society accounts; stocks and shares, unit trusts, PEPs, TESSAs; life insurance policies, and redemption values of investments yet to mature.

• With their specialised knowledge the services of a financial management group could be useful. The more accurate the information you give on the range and value of assets, the more focused and valuable the service to you.

• Try to agree as much as possible with your spouse. Fighting over every little aspect is costly, and can result in a downward spiral where what is in the "pot" is even further reduced.

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How to keep track with active funds



THE JONATHAN DAVIS COLUMN

Since I started writing a few months ago about the merits of index tracking funds, I have received a lot of comments from both inside and outside the fund management industry. Many have been polite and supportive, others, inevitably, less so. What is clear is that the argument about the merits of active investment strikes at the very heart of the nature of the investment management business. It also throws into stark relief the ambiguous nature of most people's attitudes to the question of risk and return.

As many active fund managers quite rightly point out, the case for index tracking funds rests on a curious paradox. The reason why most active fund managers fail to outperform the market averages has something to do with the fees and transaction costs which they incur. But it is also partly about the fact that stock markets are fundamentally competitive places where thousands of talented and highly paid people are in a struggle to outperform each other. By definition, if your objective is to do better than average, this contest is one which, in any given year, half of the contestants simply cannot win. To go on winning year after year becomes progressively harder still, which is why it is so rarely achieved over long periods of time.

The intensity of competition in financial markets is the hard kernel of truth which underlies the flawed academic notion that stock markets are efficient, in the sense that they discount all available information. The paradox is that index tracking only works because markets are competitive. Yet if everyone were to switch to an index-tracking strategy, the markets would cease to be competitive and the strategy would then cease to work. Everyone would be so busy chasing each other's tail that there would be nobody left to do the hard competitive analysis which is what makes most shares in the first place reasonably valued most of the time.

Quite when you reach

the point is a matter for debate. Is it when 25 per cent of all the money under management is essentially following an index-tracking strategy? Or 50 per cent? Or 75 per cent?

There are as many answers as there are estimates of how much money is already invested in this way. (It is one thing to monitor how many pension funds, for example, are explicitly following an index-tracking policy – it seems to be about 25 per cent of the total – but quite another to know how many other funds are in effect indexing most of their money without explicitly admitting the fact.)

That there is such a point is not in doubt. My view, for what it is worth, is that we are still some way short of reaching the point at which the marginal returns to active management start to rise again. The number of people employed in the securities business worldwide, for example, continues to rise, as does the amount of money under professional management. While an increasing amount of research effort is now being channelled into places such as continental Europe and the emerging markets, there is no sign of any let up in the competitive monitoring of leading share prices in the established London and New York markets.

Even had we reached the apotheosis point for index tracking, which I am sure we have not, it still would not follow that for most ordinary investors active management was a better bet. It would then be a question of assessing the cost and risk of an active strategy, relative to that of taking what the market averages have to offer. The thing which most investors – and most pension fund trustees – seem to find hardest to accept is that, in stock market investment, average performance is a perfectly legitimate objective, especially if it comes in a bundle with low costs. This is only another way of saying that for anyone with a reasonably diversified portfolio of shares, the highest influence on the way its value moves

will be the way the market as a whole moves, not the performance of the individual shares.

There is no doubt that a few very successful professional investors can consistently outperform the pack over long periods of time (as it happens, I have written a book, coming out early next year, which profiles some of them). But unless you know how to pick them out, it does not follow automatically that you will be able to benefit from the fact.

If you are able to do so, or if you have the time to pick your own shares and to find a successful formula for doing so, then that is obviously what you should do. Just recognise, however, that the odds are that you will end up doing about average – or maybe worse.

Not all is lost, however, even if you cannot see your own way to outperform the market over time. One way to have consistently beaten the averages in the last few years has been to buy shares in the fund management companies themselves. Mercury Asset Management (which has just been bid for by Merrill Lynch), Perpetual and Invesco have all done exceptionally well for investors. Even M&G and Henderson have mostly kept pace with the index, despite having a number of internal and competitive issues to resolve.

What you get with one of the better fund management companies is not just the benefit of exposure to rising markets – their income rises automatically as the value of their funds under management goes up – but also the chance to buy back (as it were) some of the juicy management fees that make active management such an expensive business in the first place. The party does tend to stop when stock markets go into reverse, however – so, in opting for fund management company shares, you are still partially back in the business of trying to call the market yourself. And that, as we know, is the hardest part of it all.

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The benefits of returning to a state pension

Recent changes to legislation have slashed the value of contracting out of the state pension scheme. Andrew Verity finds that millions of personal pension holders could be better off back in Serps.

If picking a pension were like doing a dance, there would be just one name for the annual routine of deciding whether to be in the state earnings related pension scheme (Serps) or not. The hokky-kokey.

Every year, the 6 million holders of personal pensions, plus another half a million in company-run money purchase schemes, are expected to make a crucial decision which can have a profound effect on their wealth - or poverty - in retirement. Should they be in, or out, of the state earnings-related pension scheme?

Currently, most of the millions of private pension savers are out of the scheme. By "contracting out", the saver forgoes the benefits of Serps in exchange for a rebate of national insurance contributions which then goes into a private scheme.

If the rebate to the private scheme is large enough, and the return on the investments it buys is high enough, personal pension holders will be better off with a private scheme until they reach a "pivotal age", usually 47 for women and 52 for men.

But for future pensioners, the whole question of contracting out to a private scheme has been thrown into confusion by two recent events, triggering warnings that millions may be better off returning to the state scheme earlier. And actuaries are warning that some may be better off staying in the state scheme - full stop.

The first event was the July decision of Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the

Exchequer, to abolish tax credits on dividends, reducing the return on investments which a pension fund can expect to earn. If a pension fund is expected to grow by less, then it is less likely at retirement to pay benefits to match Serps.

Second, in April, when the 1995 Pensions Act came into force, rebates were in effect slashed. While every saver formerly received a rebate worth 4.8 per cent of their earnings, these now change with age. Personal pension savers under 30 now get a rebate worth 3.1 per cent of their earnings; at 50 they get 9 per cent.

pounds, whittled away to nothing by the flat-rate fees.

Brian Wilson, a B&W expert on contracting out, said: "My suspicion is that the Budget changes probably knock out contracting out of Serps as an option for most people. I'm surprised that so many people are contracted out; I would have thought that the Budget change would be the killer blow."

Worst of all, there are 3.5 million holders of personal pensions, mostly on incomes of less than £10,000 a year, who make no extra contribution of their own

above the rebate. The average amount that goes into their pension every year is just £350 - an amount so small that fees could erode it to nothing by the time the saver retires.

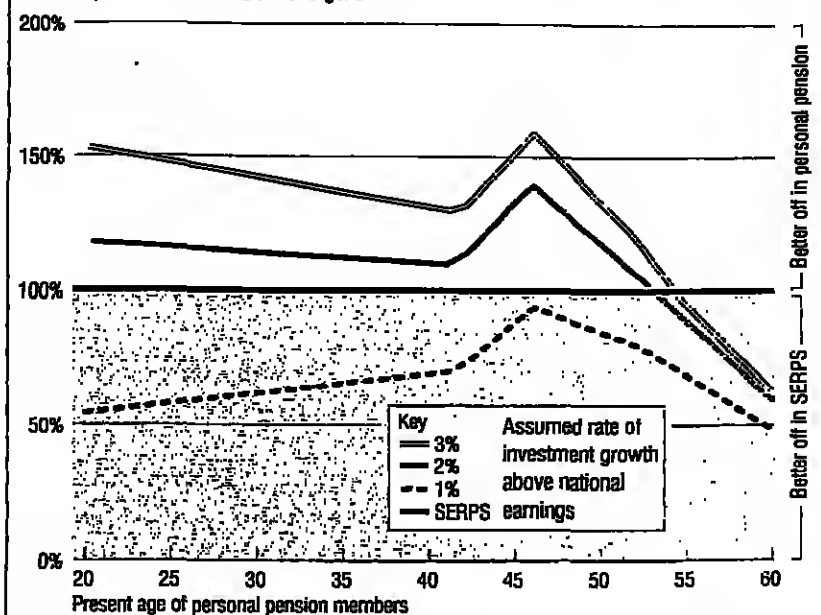
Since the Budget, the Government has declined to say whether it will revise rebates upwards. The IFA Association, which represents independent financial advisers, last week told the Government that its members would be forced to advise millions of clients to return to Serps unless more information was available.

Last week, John Denham, the pensions minister at the DSS, bowed to relentless pressure from the pensions industry by announcing he would instruct the Government Actuary to look at rebates. He added: "We are committed to ensuring that individuals have good quality second pensions and wish to enable as many people as possible to achieve this through [private] provision."

However, even if a change is considered necessary, it will not happen until April 1999 at the earliest. The IFA Association wants to know as soon as possible whether a rise in rebates will occur in order that its members can give informed advice. Savers concerned about their pension should expect advice from their adviser or company early next year - and should not accept a refusal.

What your pension will be worth compared to SERPS

Personal pension as a % of SERPS forgone



According to leading actuaries Bacon & Woodrow, the seemingly generous spirit behind the new rebates was a phantom. Even the Government Actuary noted that the new rebates were too small to cover the amount that went out to most private pension providers in flat-rate monthly fees and other expenses. Far from making it easier to stay out of Serps, it made it harder.

Bacon & Woodrow warns that unless the Government considers raising the level of rebates - an exercise that could cost hundreds of millions of pounds - millions of savers should not be contracting out. Potentially, savers who have been contracting out for just a few years could see their private savings, worth hundreds of

BEST BORROWING RATES

Telephone	% Rate and period	Mar. adv. %	Fee	Inc.
MORTGAGES				
FIXED RATE				
Scarlborough BS	0800 153149	1.25% to 1.50	85p	0.175%
Northern Rock	0800 591500	3.99% to 1.20	75p	538p
Barclay & West	0800 118955	5.88% to 1.01	90p	125p
VARIABLE DISCOUNTED RATES				
Scarlborough BS	0800 153149	4.50% for 2 years	80p	125p
First Mortgage	0800 080088	5.50% for 3 years	90p	125p
Barclay & West	0800 118955	7.00% for 5 years	85p	5 with best ASU
FIRST TIME BUYERS FIXED RATES				
Woolwich	0800 400000	4.39% to 1.10	10p	125p
Lambeth BS	0845 905132	5.20% to 1.01	90p	125p
Coventry BS	0800 128125	6.50% to 31.30	95p	125p
FIRST TIME BUYERS VARIABLE DISCOUNTED RATES				
Woolwich	0800 400000	2.45% for 1 year	10p	125p
First Mortgage	0800 080088	4.70 for 2 years	90p	125p
Northern Rock	0800 591500	0.85% for 5 years	95p	125p
UNSECURED PERSONAL LOANS				
UNSECURED				
Direct Line	0161 680 9966	12.8% A	£163.75	£198.34
Capital One Direct	0800 216252	12.9%	£195.48	£198.54
Alliance & Leicester	0990 626352	13.3%	£187.73	£197.56
SECURED (SECOND CHARGE)				
Clydesdale Bank	0800 240604	5.7% Reg	£2K to £15K	6 mths to 25 years
Royal Bank of Scotland	0800 121121	10.7%	£2.5K to £100K	3 years to retirement
First Direct	0345 180103	11.2%	£2K to Reg	Up to 40 years
OVERDRAFTS				
ALLIANCE & LEICESTER				
Account	APR	Max LTV	Read monthly payments (£500 over 3 yrs)	
ALLIANCE	12.9%	95%	£198.34	£198.34
Bank of Scotland	12.9%	95%	£198.34	£198.34
Hatfield BS	12.9%	95%	£198.34	£198.34
CREDIT CARDS				
STANDARD				
Capital One Bank	0800 689000	Visa	0.64% N	7.50% N
Co-operative Bank	0800 102000	Advantage Visa	0.64% N	7.50% N
Robert Fleming S&P	0800 825100	Base Rate Linked M/V	1.00%	14.00% N
GOLD CARDS				
Co-operative Bank	0345 212121	Base Rate Visa 220K	0.60%	11.80% N
Co-operative Bank	0800 102000	Advantage Visa 220K	0.64% N	7.50% N
American Express	01273 620555	Amex	0.75% N	12.50% N
STORE CARDS				
John Lewis				
Card	APR	Max LTV	Read monthly payments (£500 over 3 yrs)	
John Lewis	1.39%	18.0%	£198.34	£198.34
John Lewis	1.39%	18.0%	£198.34	£198.34
John Lewis	1.39%	18.0%	£198.34	£198.34

BEST SAVINGS RATES

Telephone number	Account	Notice or term	Deposit	Rate %
INSTANT ACCESS				
Clydesdale Bank	0800 440385	Saver	Instant	5.00%
Woolwich	0800 222000	Card Saver	Instant	5.00%
Paragon BS	0800 677000	Instant Access	Instant	5.00%
Lloyds & TSB	0800 225277	Easy Access	Instant	5.00%
INSTANT ACCESS POSTAL ACCOUNTS				
Scottish Widows Bank	0945 828282	Instant Access	Instant	5.00%
C&G	0800 745437	Instant Access	Instant	5.00%
Lloyds & TSB	0800 111220	Instant Access	Instant	5.00%
Alliance & Leicester	0845 905 8800	First Class Saver	Instant	5.00%
NOTICE ACCOUNTS & BONDS				
Barclay & West	0800 222121	Fixed 3m	3m	5.00%
Lloyds & TSB	0800 111220	Fixed 3m	3m	5.00%
Northern Rock	0800 591500	Fixed 3m	3m	5.00%
Woolwich	0800 222000	Fixed 3m	3m	5.00%
CHEQUE ACCOUNTS				
Woolwich	0800 222000	Fixed 3m	3m	5.00%
Woolwich	0800 222000	Fixed 3m	3m	5.00%
Woolwich	0800 222000	Fixed 3m	3m	5.00%
FIXED RATE BONDS				
Woolwich	0800 222000	Fixed 3m	3m	5.00%
Woolwich	0800 222000	Fixed 3m	3m	5.00%
Woolwich	0800 222000	Fixed 3m	3m	5.00%
FIRST TESSAS				
Barclay & West	0800 222121	Fixed 3m	3m	5.00%
Woolwich	0800 222000	Fixed 3m	3m	5.00%
Woolwich	0800 222000	Fixed 3m	3m	5.00%
FOLLOW-ON TESSAS				
Woolwich	0800 222000	Fixed 3m	3m	5.00%
Woolwich	0800 222000	Fixed 3m	3m	5.00%
Woolwich	0800 222000	Fixed 3m	3m	5.00%
GUARANTEED INCOME BONDS (net)				
Woolwich	0800 222000	Fixed 3m	3m	5.00%
Woolwich	0800 222000	Fixed 3m	3m	5.00%
Woolwich	0800 222000	Fixed 3m	3m	5.00%
OFFSHORE ACCOUNTS (gross)				
Woolwich	0800 222000	Fixed 3m	3m	5.00%
Woolwich	0800 222000	Fixed 3m	3m	5.00%
Woolwich	0800 222000	Fixed 3m	3m	5.00%
NATIONAL SAVINGS ACCOUNTS (GROSS)				
Woolwich	0800 222000	Fixed 3m	3m	5.00%
Woolwich	0800 222000	Fixed 3m	3m	5.00%
Woolwich	0800 222000	Fixed 3m	3m	5.00%

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CLIFFORD GERMAN

What the Chancellor needs to do before anyone can plan for the future

The sight and sound of the Government falling off a succession of financial high wires is not an encouraging one, unless you happen to be a Conservative politician. Last month it was the special treatment for tobacco sponsorship of Formula One racing, last week it was the belly-flop launch of the individual savings account and this week the painful consequences when plans to cut benefits for single parents who will not or cannot find work tripped over the welfare to work programme.

It is increasingly clear that ever since it came to power this Government has been making policy piecemeal, when what is needed is an all-embracing review of taxation, mortgages, pensions, benefits and savings which will let savers, investors, borrowers, financial planners and their customers have all the facts they need to make long-term financial decisions.

Take pensions. Proper pension planning needs long-term stability and certainty, yet the pensions industry does not know whether it is coming or going. Everyone agrees that the role of the state has to be scaled down, that company pension schemes linked to final salary and length of service are giving way to portable personal pension plans. Yet millions of people have no private pension plans in position and most of those who do are not putting away enough each year to be comfortable in retirement.

The Government has set out proposals for stakeholder pensions to try to bring in the 10 million people who do not yet have a private pension plan. They have been widely welcomed but we still do not know whether they will be available to existing pension holders as well, or what the tax regime will be.

But almost the Chancellor's first act in the July Budget was to cut the existing tax relief pension that funds enjoy, a move which will reduce the prospective pensions a given sum will buy in future by up to 10 per cent. The rebates on national insurance payable to people who opt out of the state earnings-related pension scheme (Serps) have been cut back to the

point where many financial advisers think more people should consider moving back into Serps. A new review of rebates has been promised but will not be operative until April 1999.

A Royal Commission has just been set up to review ways of providing affordable insurance policies to help people pay for long-term residential and nursing care, but the commission will not report for 12 months, it could be two to three years before it is on the statute book and there are no clues how it might fit into the overall tax and savings picture. Companies like PPP Healthcare have promised that anyone who buys a policy now will not be disadvantaged by any future changes, but this is hardly a recipe to encourage customers to buy now, and this is not a business where time is on the side of the purchaser.

The Chancellor also plans to reform the tax system, but this only creates uncertainty about the future of tax-free lump sums which are such a vital part of the appeal of personal pensions. Suggestions that the Treasury would like to remove tax relief on contributions to pension funds and switch it to pensions in payment, so that pensions are treated the same way as tax-free investments, may well have an intellectual appeal, as well as improving the Treasury's own cash flow by several billions a year. But until the issue is cleared up, investors do not know whether to bet on a pension or a PEP.

Well they will soon, if the Paymaster General has his way and the lifetime limit on the tax-free savings accounts that will replace TESSAs and PEPs is pegged at £50,000. That is a nice little tax-free nest-egg but nothing like enough on its own to provide a comfortable income for life. Now I have some sympathy for the Chancellor because someone somewhere has to pay some tax and the fine did need drawing on PEPs some time ago. But for obvious political reasons no Tory government was going to take unpopular decisions that could be left to Labour.

However, the proposed £50,000 limit is going to force far too many

people to rethink their financial planning from 1999. Likewise, the Government should have lifted the ceiling on TESSAs by £1,000 a year instead of imposing a £1,000 limit on cash investments in an ISA.

Meanwhile, the working poor will never be able to save conventionally. They need something really worthwhile, like a national insurance rebate that cannot be spent until they retire.

The rumours have been going around that the Chancellor plans to abolish top rate tax relief on pension contributions. Although it creates a sense of relief when he does not do so, in the long run proper investment planning is impossible unless investors know the tax environment in which they are working.

Lack of information over the future of capital gains tax and inheritance tax is also creating uncertainty. It simply helps advisers and accountants to sell avoidance plans that may or may not turn out to be effective. The Chancellor missed one chance in the green budget last month to introduce reforms which would have let investors know where they stand.

The latest round of rumours suggest that the Chancellor is also planning to reform separate taxation of married couples, although no one seems to be sure whether he intends to restore the incentives to married couples the previous government had progressively reduced; or whether, as some alarmists think, he is planning to tighten controls on the transfer of assets between spouses as part of a move to make inheritance tax more effective. That, in turn, would create a new set of rules governing lifetime gifts and asset transfers between spouses and sow more confusion into the divorce law where plans for pension splitting are slowly emerging.

If there really is a master plan in the Chancellor's mind and there really is logic and order in the apparent chaos I will be the first to take my hat off to him when the reform is complete, the loopholes have been closed and the financial services industry can get down to lifetime financial planning for its clients. But the prospects are not encouraging.

7/PENSIONS

THE INDEPENDENT
SATURDAY 13 DECEMBER 1997
▼ 7



The ghost of scandals past ...

Most people still do not realise that some personal pension plans offer a very good deal to all their plan holders, while others provide an appalling deal to many, and sometimes most, of their customers. It is not just the published charges which eat up the benefits, John Chapman explains. Transferring your pension plan, stopping payment of premiums and retiring early can all seriously damage your wealth in stealthy ways.

Three years into a new regime featuring disclosure of charges, it is clear that the regulations have not made the best of it. They have focused on requiring lengthy descriptions of products to individual consumers. They have made no effort to make or encourage comparisons of the effects of charges, which was the real aim of disclosure. As a result, the bulk of consumers are unaware that they should steer clear of the many poor products that are being vigorously sold.

The danger signals were clear two years ago. Given the different incidence of charges, and the manipulations to finance high maturity payouts for the few through penalties on the many stopping early, Office of Fair Trading (OFT) reports had pointed to the importance of comparisons of the effects of charges at early, mid-way and maturity stages of plans.

To stimulate debate, I suggested ABC ratings at three stages in the life of plans. An AAA rating would indicate good returns at all stages, while a CBA rating would indicate poor returns when stopping early, moderate when stopping mid-way, and a good maturity payout for the small minority reaching that stage.

After much discussion with the industry, Money Marketing, a leading paper for independent financial advisers (IFAs), adopted the ABC rating system and has used it in its two product surveys for the last two years. Sadly, however, the national newspapers, with the notable exception of *The Independent*, have given little publicity to this rating system. The financial regulators have not encouraged its use or the use of any rating system. Hence disclosure has been a botched job.

What makes pension plans so complicated and so different is the variety of charges used by companies to recoup their, often very different, levels of expenses. There are initial charges of around 5 per cent, and annual fund management charges of around 1 per cent. In addition, there can be heavy charges through reduced allocations of premiums, or through "capital units" which are valueless unless held to maturity and which attract swingeing annual levies if so held. There are also introduction and annual fees, and often significant penalties if you transfer your plan, retire early, or simply stop paying your

premiums and go "paid up", leaving what the company accords to you to grow with their investment performance.

The ABC system of rating does not tell you how many people are likely to be affected by charges at such stages on different pension plans. Here the persistency figures published each year by the Personal Investment Authority are increasingly useful. These show that on average, after three years, 34 per cent of pension plan holders with direct sales force (DSF) companies had stopped paying premiums, compared with 22 per cent of plans sold by IFAs. Three-year lapse rates varied from 10 per cent with Standard Life to 55 per cent with Guardian. I have assumed follow-on lapse rates averaging 8 per cent each year for DSF sales and 6 per cent for IFA sales. On such a basis the proportions of 30-year plans held to maturity would vary from over 30 per cent with some companies to only 5 per cent with others.

Persistency figures can be combined with projected transfer values of each company, assuming a 9 per cent a year growth in funds. For a 30-year plan with premiums of £200 a month transfer values after two years vary greatly, from £5,408 with Equitable Life to £1,390 with Abbey Life. For each company a break-even year can be derived, when the transfer value indicated by projections exceeds the accumulated premiums paid. The proportions of plan holders stopping premiums before breaking even and their average losses are shown by company in the table. It appears that on average over a third of plans result in losses on transfer, and that with some companies the proportion may be over 60 per cent.

Most plan holders, however, do not transfer but go "paid-up", ie they stop paying their premiums for various reasons and leave their net savings to grow to their maturity date with the same company. Unfortunately, the disclosure regime has somehow failed to require the disclosure of paid-up values accorded by companies. Luckily, a survey by the IFA Alan Lakey, published in *Money Management* in November, has revealed what these paid-up values are. In most cases they are the same as transfer values, but in about a quarter of plans they are much higher. But such figures are illusory; many are only pitched higher so that companies can maximise their charges, typically through annual levies on notional capital units. Another revelation of this survey is that some paid-up values at the same level as transfer values also include extraordinary charges, as indicated by the low maturity values arising from them.

The projected rates of return for plan holders going paid-up at various stages can now be estimated, assuming 9 per cent annual growth. At two years they vary from 8 per cent a year or over with Equitable Life and Marks & Spencer to under 2 per cent with Allied Dunbar and Lincoln. After five years the gap ranges from 8.3 to 5.8 per cent a year, and after 20 years from 8.3 to 7 per cent a year. Although the gap narrows, the crucial point is that those sold

policies with high-charge companies face an enormous handicap compared with those with low-charge companies. Many of them will stop paying premiums early and receive very poor returns, whereas if they were with a low-charge company they stand to get a good return whether they stop early or not.

The proportions of plan holders likely to receive returns of various levels can be estimated. Those receiving appallingly low returns of under 5 per cent a year are shown in the table. With several companies over a quarter and even towards half of plans result in such poor returns.

A new indicator can now be introduced. The "average plan return" can be calculated from the projections of returns from going paid-up in any year and of those stopping in those years.

As shown, such projected returns vary from over 8 per cent to under 5 per cent. The average plan return reflects the charges, their levels and structures, and lapse rates. It picks up features like paid-up plans having no value until say a year's premiums have been paid, which may elude the ABC ratings. The average plan return does not, however, indicate the structure of charges, as the ABC ratings do. In effect, the two approaches complement each other to present a useful picture.

Of course, the actual returns will depend on investment performances as well. Any company with consistently had performance should be required to explain itself. But in the early years, when the effects of charges can be so great, variations in performance can have only marginal effects. Towards the later stages of the life of policies investment performances will be more important, but closing a gap of 1 per cent a year for each of 20 or 30 years is a pretty tall order.

The table also shows the new income for regular premium pensions for each company. It is worth adding that in 1966 the four companies at the bottom of the table for which figures are available, ie Allied Dunbar, Barclays, Skandia and Lincoln, achieved sales increases of 11 per cent, 16 per cent, 73 per cent and 22 per cent respectively.

What does the table tell us? Can companies, as the fog lifts on their activities, continue with charging and selling practices resulting in substantial proportions of their plans bringing losses or very poor returns for their plan holders? Can the regulators maintain their line that they are only interested in selling practices, not in what is being sold? Can they defend the apparent error in not requiring the effects of going paid up to be disclosed?

Can the Government really continue to subsidise the vast numbers of plans with losses or poor returns? Can all such parties scandalously continue to sit back while hundreds of thousands of consumers are sold poor-value pension plans because they not had the interest, energy or guts to do anything effective about it, like giving widespread publicity to a rating system for a start?

Got to make a penny or two: panto Scrooge

Photograph: Kevin Lowe/Daily Record

ILLUSTRATIVE LISTING OF PENSION PLANS BY RATINGS

Company* (new income 1996/£m)	On Transfer Plans losing %	Average loss £	On Going Paid Up or to Maturity % of plans with returns under 5%	Average Plan return (%pa)	Ratings, early mid and final stages
Equitable (300)	0?	-	0	8.3	A+A+A+
Marks & Spencer (na)	0?	-	0	8.1	A+AA+
Scottish Widows (70)	16	110	0	7.8	AAA
Virgin (na)	(na)	(na)	(na)	7.8	AAA
Alliance & Leicester (na)	(na)	(na)	(na)	7.8	AAA
Standard Life (123)	(10)	130	0	7.7	AAB
Legal & General (62)	(30)	230	11	7.4	AAA
Friends Provident (39)	(33)	1,240	7	7.4	BAA
Clerical Medical (38)	(33)	1,120	0	7.3	BBA
Commercial Union (24)	(24)	180	0	7.3	ABB
National Mutual (42)	(38)	1,500	13	7.2	BBA
Norwich Union (68)	(36)	1,250	7	7.2	BBA
NPI (55)	(29)	1,210	5	7.2	BBB
Scottish Mutual (39)	(21)	80	0	7.1	BBA
AXA Equity & Law (25)	(36)	1,070	10	7.1	BBA
General Accident (46)	(31)	1,250	7	7.0	BBA
Scottish Life (43)	(39)	1,720	20	6.9	BBA
Midland (na)	(38)	770	11	6.9	BBC
Eagle Star (10)	(36)	na	14	6.8	BBB
Scottish Amicable (44)	(28)	1,510	13	6.8	BBC
Nacwest (25)	(44)	1,210	0	6.7	BBB
Sun Life (97)	(49)	1,470	30	6.5	C-BA
J.Rothschild (27)	(40)	2,150	25	6.4	CCB
Scottish Equitable (118)	(46)	1,510	24	6.4	CCB
Abbey National	(45)	1,130	23	6.2	BBB
Black Horse (21)	(56)	1,950	31	6.1	CCB
Allied Dunbar (94)	(54)	2,050	35	6.0	C-CA
TSB (na)	(53)	1,550	34	5.9	CCC
Skandia (18)	(40)	1,550	27	5.9	CCC-
Barclays (20)	(55)	1,620	24	5.8	BCC
Guardian (na)	(59)	1,760	45	5.7	CCC
Abbey Life (43)	(62)	2,610	na	na	na
Lincoln (26)	(64)	2,390	50	4.4	C-C-C

* 30-year plans with premiums of £200 a month, with projected growth of 9 per cent per annum
Note - The "correlation" between the estimated average plan return and ABC ratings is less close when plans only allow paid up values after a period, eg after a year with Abbey National and Barclays.
Note - Because of lack of data some substantial providers, notably the Prudential (£185m. new income in 1996) could not be included

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Annual property

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1. 姓名: 张三
 2. 性别: 男
 3. 年龄: 25
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Let the buyer beware ... their surveyor and solicitor

First-time buyers and veteran home-owners alike are sitting ducks. Shoddy surveys shoot us down. So do solicitors who swan off, and vendors with two faces and forked tongues. Overwhelmed by detail and legalese, we are ripe for plucking and gazumping. Robert Liebman visits the shooting range and discovers ways to avoid the quacks

Standing in what was soon to be her master bedroom, Pippa saw a sag in the ceiling. In fact, when she reached up, she actually touched the ceiling. She couldn't deal with this alarming situation, but she knew a man who could.

A communications manager, she had been living with her parents in Sussex, commuting to London, and property hunting in another part of Sussex. Good properties were scarce, and she was relieved to find a decent two-bedroom house.

Pippa had revisited the house only to measure up for furniture, not to look for flaws or structural defects. The lender's surveyor had found nothing amiss and approved the mortgage. Little stood in the way of a routine exchange and completion. Little, that is, except a ceiling seeking a cuddle with the floor.

Pippa consulted her father, and a few days later he examined the loft. "On a dull day, daylight streamed through a sizeable gap in the roof between the party wall and the roof. If it had been a sunny day, I could have read a book up there," he says.

This was no mere missing or slipped tile. And it wasn't new either. "There were many stained bricks beneath the gap, and you could see where pitch had trickled down along the brickwork. Someone had tried to fix it before."



Hillary and Andy Morgan are among those who have experienced unnecessary distress due to confusing legalese

Photograph: John Lawrence

The sellers had recently vacated and, his curiosity aroused, Pippa's father scoured the empty premises, which readily revealed its secrets. "I found large cracks in the cupboards, and damp under the stairs. Near the fireplace on the other side of the house, the carpet was so damp that it was squidgy to walk on."

He doubts that the surveyor really inspected the loft, and Pippa wonders how the bucking ceiling escaped her notice on her first viewing. She withdrew from the sale, promptly exchanged on another property, and completed. Not, alas, without new surprises in the form of three successive erroneous mortgage offers before the lender finally got the details right — the day before completion.

Hillary and Andy Morgan needed to correct their mortgage offer only once, but faced other, more troubling surprises when they sold their Old Amersham flat to buy a larger flat in High Wycombe. Because the new property contained neither a garden nor a lift, they anticipated a service charge approximately £1,000 less than the actual amount.

Worrisome, too, was a clause in their lease, which had been scoured by Andy, who has a law degree. "We didn't realise that we would need the freeholder's permission to make internal changes," says Hillary, a marketing manager with publisher HarperCollins in west London. A twosome soon to be a threesome, they intended to convert a huge bathroom into

a bedroom. "We had to show the architect's plans to the managing agent, and also pay a fee," she says.

At least their lease was comprehensible. Another recent buyer, Caren, had a lease which, taken literally, seemed to require permission for all internal changes, even down to modernising baths and showers. She intended to let the flat to foreigners, and an upgrading of many interior features was on the cards. Caren insisted on clarification, and it was forthcoming only after she threatened to take her custom elsewhere.

Even her own solicitor was stumped by the lease terminology. Indeed, when it comes to surprises, some solicitors are more problem than solution. For verification, ask

anyone who, on exchange or completion or other crucial day, discovered that their solicitor was on the aptly-named Costa del Sol.

Caren received reassurances and quickly found a tenant after sprucing up the flat. The Morgans were safely delivered of a bouncing new flat. "No one was bolshie, and we got the permissions, but it delayed things," says Hillary. Completion was much nearer the baby's arrival than we'd anticipated.

Pippa prospered. She soon found a house far superior to the damp and crumbling premises that she probably would have been stuck with had she not gone to measure up.

Each enjoyed a satisfactory outcome. But each had also been deeply distressed

by the unexpected and potentially costly hitches.

Hillary Morgan knows what to do next time. "Start sooner. Everything takes longer than you plan for." Pippa will never buy another property without commissioning her own survey. She might also take a lesson out of her father's book: conduct your own thorough survey, and borrow a ladder to look into the loft. Had she done so on her initial visit, she might have spared herself considerable anxiety.

Pippa also believes that "we worry too much about making pests of ourselves. It is up to us to ensure that our solicitors and others involved in the process provide the service they are supposed to provide."

Jane Tait allows you to pester her as much as you want or need to, for only a tenner. Her Home Buyers' Advisory Service, which she founded in 1985, primarily arranges mortgages. However, the £10 entitles you to a 45-minute consultation, you don't have to arrange a mortgage with HBAS, and the fee includes unlimited phone calls during the conveyance, for advice or simply to whinge.

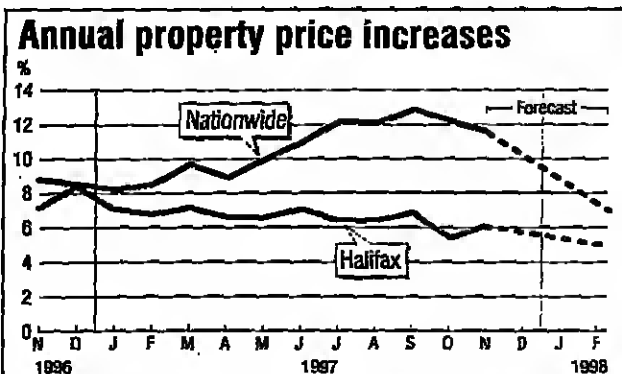
After Pippa completed, her parents sold their house to move nearer to her. Convinced about the necessity of nagging, they rang their estate agent and solicitor so often that BT recommended that they specify these phone numbers in their Friends and Family list.

Chance favours those who are prepared. Delve into the various documents. Most of us don't want to deal with large print, let alone small, but the deeds and leases contain vital details. You might be in for a beneficial, if not pleasant surprise.

Home Buyers' Advisory Service, 18 Seymour Place, London W1H 5WH; 0171 723 6001
Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, 12 Great George Street, Parliament Square, London SW1P 3AD; 0171 222 7000
The Law Society, 50 Chancery Lane, London WC2A 1SX; 0171 242 1222

Prices: up, up and away, or hold on tight for a bumpy landing?

Homeowners are notoriously obsessed by how much their property is worth now, and next year. But how seriously can you take those forecasts and is it possible to generalise? Penny Jackson looks at last year's forecasts and what the experts predict for 1998.



Not many people would quibble with two forecasts for house price increases that differ only by 2 per cent. But as the Nationwide predicts an average 7 per cent increase for 1998 and the Halifax 5 per cent, it is interesting to note that as our chart shows they varied as much as 6 per cent in 1997.

Despite both having started the year predicting 7 per cent, the Halifax now puts the average increase between 5.5 and 6 per cent, while the Nationwide reports a 12 per cent rise.

Rarely have these two major mortgage lenders found themselves so far apart. A major reason is thought to be the London and south-east factor which features more heavily with the Nationwide. In September, for instance, as the Halifax was putting house price inflation in the south-east at 16 per cent for the year, so East Anglia registered at 7.6 per cent and Scotland at 0.8 per cent.

Some parts of central London though saw 40 per cent increases, a scale which caught most people by surprise and has pushed the average to between 18 per cent (De Groot Collis) and 20 per cent (Knight Frank).

Next year, a cooling off at the top of the market is expected. Stamp duty increases in April, overpricing on some properties and uncertainties in the stock markets are all seen as factors. This year's mixed picture should be replaced by a less volatile, more broadly based growth. Savills, whose predictions tally with the Nationwide's current 12 per cent, sees central London prices rising by 4 per cent with the average across the country increasing by 9 per cent.

But how accurate were the

pundits last year and how do they read the trends for '98? Yolande Barnes, Savills Research (prime central London was predicted to rise by 7.4 per cent this year and country houses by 14 per cent) says, "In the Home Counties we had seen just over 18 per cent by the end of September as London money moved further out along the main communication links to London. Country house prices were also boosted by strong local economies."

"Prime central London was another story. Our figures were reached in the first quarter but we are not ashamed of the theory that the market would slow down. The signs are that the market is fully if not overvalued. We expect to see an upturn in provincial properties next year with more people coming into the quality league having built up nest eggs. They are not borrowing as much and so can afford to outbid the competition. Purchasing power is high."

David Woodcock, Black Horse Agencies (last year they predicted sharp rises due to demand but an average rise of between 10 and 12 per cent). "The reality was an exceptionally buoyant market in London and surrounding areas, with dramatic rises and demand outstripping supply. We are cautiously optimistic for '98, but the principal cloud is that interest rates will continue to rise. But rates will still be able to sell. Hanging on in the hope of obtaining a higher price is unlikely to lead to significant benefit. Across the eastern and Midlands regions Black Horse expects increases between 5 and 7 per cent with some hotspots. In the north prices should start

to rise steadily at a rate between 3 and 5 per cent."

Bill Hughes of country division Cluttons Daniel Smith (in London they predicted 10 per cent, with some properties increasing by 20 per cent): "We are not as bullish as last year. Job losses in the banking world could have a regional impact in the middle ranges. There is still huge pent-up demand and in the £450,000 market we expect rises of about 7 per cent, but in the £750,000 to £1.2 million between 7 and 10 per cent."

Ian Darby, John Charcol, mortgage advisers (Predicted price rise of 5 to 6 per cent and interest rate rise of 8.75 by end of this year. Rates now stand at 8.7 per cent): "I can see a potential for another rate increase and the likelihood of some rate falls later in the year ending with a mortgage rate of 8.49 per cent."

Ian Homersham, John D Wood (Predicted prices rising by about 12 per cent): "Confidence has returned generally and short of a serious stock market crash there is no reason why the market should lose any of its momentum. We predict increases ranging from 2 per cent to 5 per cent in Fulham and between 10 per cent and 15 per cent in Mayfair."

Chris Palmer, managing director Hampton International. "My view is that 1998 will be a year of two halves, with a slight dip in prices in the early part which in conjunction with unrealistic vendors may cause a hiatus in the market. Barring any horrific measures in the Budget we should see a strong second half with an overall increase of 5 per cent."

'More than anything I miss being at the centre of things. There's not even a Gap in Winchester'

All city dwellers dream from time to time about escaping the rat race and moving to the country, but what happens to the minority who actually do it? Ginetta Vedrickas listens to three salutary stories.

Wouldn't it be lovely? Scampering around country lanes in search of twisted willow for floral displays then home to the farmhouse and buttery crumpets for tea. Quick, slap my face, I'm having one of those rural idyll fantasies again.

Peter Ripley, like myself, obviously read too much Enid Blyton as a child — I spent every summer in Devon with my granddad, roaming fields and beaches like the Famous Five. After an idyllic holiday in Cornwall with his children, Mr Ripley decided to act: he gave up work, sold their Putney terrace and moved the family to a remote, Cornish mining village. Did it live up to expectation?

"At first it was like being on a fabulously long holiday, away from pollution and noise. It was summer, we had friends down and spent weeks exploring the coast, collecting fossils and enjoying our cottage," says Mr Ripley.

But eventually summer turned to autumn. Friends visited less frequently and the only work Mr Ripley found was poorly paid. "Everyone takes huge pay cuts in the country so you end up with a worse standard of living." Isolation became a problem: "I was the only man at home with children so people in the village thought I was odd." Were the neighbours friendly? "They were Cornish nationalists and liked hedges, hawking and breeding lurchers. It was like being in Alabama," he says.

The family stuck it for a year but even the lure of the summer couldn't tempt them to stay. The cottage proved difficult to sell but they were so desperate to return they left anyway and rented in London. When Mr Ripley finally sold, he'd lost



Paradise glossed: the reality of the rural retreat can be one of isolation and poor pay

£30,000. Is London worth it? "It's fantastic. We make much more effort to take advantage of theatres, galleries, everything that's going." Any advice for aspiring Arcadians? "It depends what sort of person you are. We had friends who were just as isolated but they loved it, they were artists and liked sitting around naked."

Roger and Maggie Hands yearned for a "chocolate box thatched cottage" where Maggie could bake and potter in the garden. When Roger, an architect, was offered work in a remote village near Kendal, Cumbria they seized the opportunity to exchange life at the "heavy end" of Finsbury Park for something more peaceful. The Hands spotted an advert in the *Kendal Gazette* for a tiny shepherd's cottage to rent. After an interview with the estate manager, "we found ourselves cleaning out 10 years of rabbit shit that the previous tenant, a shepherd, had left". The family settled down to a radically different lifestyle and the children attended the tiny village school

with two classes and 37 children.

Domesticity reigned: "It was stunningly beautiful in winter and summer and I was busy with the house. I'd always wanted a real coal fire and I made lots of quilts," says Ms Hands. On the edge of a country estate, gamekeepers passed by in their Land-Rovers: "We were plucked from one kind of lifestyle into another. Cows poked their heads over our garden fence and we'd spend days walking by streams and waterfalls." The locals heard that people from London had moved up and Maggie, Roger and their children soon found themselves involved in the community: "I relied on events like Tupperware parties, things I wouldn't normally do, just to fit in."

Eventually Ms Hands tired of Tupperware and wanted to work. "There wasn't any and I felt I was stagnating. I was bored with things I'd hoped would become a way of life." The Hands missed London's spontaneity: "If you fancied popping out for a drink or a bar of chocolate at night you

couldn't. You had to plan because everything was miles away." Rain and icy winds drifted in from the fells and Ms Hands soon got fed up cleaning out the grate for the coal fire.

When Roger's firm had little work the family felt the decision to move back was made for them. Although sad to leave they felt ready to go. How did they find heavy Finsbury Park? "It seemed so lively I got a thrill just from walking to the shops at night," says Ms Hands. They have no regrets although the children insist they won't move from their road.

Davina Nicholson moved with baby Tasca from London's Kensal Green early this year to a remote cottage near Winchester. "It's only an hour and a half from London, but there's no shop, no phone box, just trees," Ms Nicholson says. "I thought this would be our final move, just me and my daughter, but maybe it suits couples more."

Having grown up in the country she felt she knew it well and could adjust to rural life

again. Has she? "It's incredible how much slower, quieter and just totally different it is." She loves walking and has a social network but at night on her way to parties... "The fucking mud, what do you do? There aren't any street lights," says Ms Nicholson.

The Rural Development Commission published a survey this week showing that 42 per cent of rural parishes have no shop but Ms Nicholson has more specific requirements: "More than anything I miss being at the centre of things. There's so much you don't think about in London, the billboards, the style. I'm no fashion victim but there's not even a Gap in Winchester."

Ms Nicholson believes London is atypical of England: "I'm used to London not England and ultimately it's very limited here." You get the feeling she will be placing her (Donna Karan) wellies in storage in the very near future. The next time you have one of those "Famous Five" fantasies, remember, they never mentioned the mud.

Get a (shelf) life, and get yourself organised ...

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11/PROPERTY

When the neighbours have bad taste

THREE TO VIEW: WITH FITTED SHELVES



Strand Platt in Winchelsea, East Sussex is a Grade II listed five-bedroom house in need of upgrading. The panelled dining-room has a full-height built-in china cupboard with shelves and glazed door. The walled garden, belonging to the house, is on the opposite side of the lane and adjoins National Trust land. With sash windows, dado height panelling and exposed timbers, it's for sale through Phillips & Stubbs for £230,000 (01797 227338).



The Old House at Frampton on the Severn in Gloucestershire is celebrating its 500th birthday. The Grade II listed six-bedroom house, built five years after Christopher Columbus discovered America, has a 15ft library with a range of fitted cupboards on two walls and adjustable bookshelves with concealed lighting. There are more shelves in a gallery. The main rooms overlook the one-and-a-half acre gardens and the village green. £225,000 through Knight Frank (01285 659771).



41 St Loo's Avenue in Chelsea is an artist's studio built above private garages. Within walking distance of Sloane Square, it has a large studio room with built-in shelves, a 9'4" ceiling height and an arched triple window. Apart from kitchen and bathroom, there's also a studio room with more shelves. £215,000 through Cluttons Daniel Smith (0171-584 1771).

Despite planning regulations, it is still surprisingly easy to create an eyesore. Fiona Brandhorst surveys the neighbourhood.

It's a bit like playing with a Fifties-style Bako Build set: take out the sash windows, replace with a Georgian bay complete with bull's-eyes, cover the bricks with pebbledash and insert a couple of Doric pillars under a porch. Look in any street, and you'll find a so-called "home improvement" that is unsympathetic to its environment.

Unfortunately, one person's eyesore is another's pride and joy and there is little to stop anyone from giving a property its own stamp of individuality. Fancy painting your house lime green with pink windowsills, or growing giant cacti in the garden? Go ahead. If you don't live in a conservation, trust or covenanted area, planning permission will probably not be required.

However, some local authorities have learnt a lesson from the home improvement legacies of the past 30 years. Bromley, the largest of the London boroughs, is so concerned that it has produced a leaflet, *Conservation Begins at Home*, warning that misguided home improvements can damage the appearance and value of your house. Robin Cooper, head of Heritage and Urban Design for Bromley, is thankful that the "stick-on bricks era" is over (should you still hanker after stone cladding, it now requires planning permission). "Some people have spent a lot of money altering their properties," says Mr Cooper. "However, if the character of the house changes, this can mean that the resale value drops."

Local authorities have limited powers to deal with complaints from residents. Gardens constantly littered with old furniture or bits of cars can be served with untidy site notices, but the response may be slow. Most of us suffer a blot on the landscape for the sake of good relations with our neighbours, but if you're unlucky enough to live next door to an uninhabited eyesore - there are 764,000 empty homes in England and Wales - you could be in for a long wait before action is taken.

Incented by the inability of a house owner to respond to repeated calls to attend to her deteriorating empty



Thorn in the side: one person's eyesore is another's pride and joy

Photograph: Andrew Buurman

property, Reading Council recently took the unprecedented step of naming her publicly. For almost 12 years, Gillian Murdoch's former council house in Lamerton Road has stood empty, attracting squatters, rubbish dumping, burglars, arsonists, drug addicts and rats. Even the building society with a call over the property did not know it was empty; the mortgage was still being paid. The council has now removed the rats, but is concerned that it will incur further costs if the house is not brought back into use; most empty properties are exempt from council tax. Mark Adlington, a neighbour, is angry that the property has been allowed to rot. "It's a danger to public health as well as an eyesore," says Mr Adlington, who has personally removed hypodermic syringes from the garden to protect local children. "It's a scandal that it stands empty when there are so many homeless people."

The scale of the problem led, last month, to the launch of the London Empty Homes Hotline, prompting hundreds of calls from the public. The manager, Erinn Buchanan, says the quality of information varies. "Some people don't know the number of the house or even the street; others know the whole history of the property, including the mortgage holder. We even have calls from estate agents wanting to know where these empty houses are. Of course, the information is data protected." In fact, a massive 41 per cent of homes become empty because of the death or long-term illness of the occupier. Government figures suggest that repossessions and evictions account for 10 per cent of empty homes. Around 19 per cent of calls to the hotline are from the owners themselves, uncertain how to deal with their empty property.

They are told about the options available, including assistance from

housing associations to bring the property back into use; they, in turn, will manage and let the property for the owner until they decide to sell.

In extreme cases, however, when all attempts to trace an owner have been made, a council may compulsorily purchase a property. Lewisham Council in south London has spent several years tracing the owner of a large Victorian house, empty for 15 years and subjected to fires, fly-tipping and vandalism. The council now believes the owner was killed in the Iran-Iraq war, and has enforced a statutory charge against it to sell the house at auction. From the proceeds, the council will recover any costs incurred. If the owner is unknown, the balance will be lodged with the Treasury and can be claimed by a relative at any time, subject to 40 per cent death duty.

Mark Baker, development control officer for Bromley, says that with limited resources the borough has to be

"reactive" rather than pro-active, relying on residents to tell the council of any problems. "We only have four enforcement officers covering 3,500 roads over 60 square miles," he adds. From my Victorian house with its inherited "Georgian improvements", I look at the timber-clad property opposite, affectionately known as "the shed". Its only permanent residents for the past five years have been a rapidly breeding colony of pigeons. So far the council has been unable to get any reply from the absent owner. But in the grand scheme of things, it's early days - I could still be looking at my feathered friends in 10 years' time.

Bromley Planning Enquiries 0181-313 4956; Reading Borough Council 0118 939 0900; London Empty Homes Hotline 0870 901 6303; Empty Homes Agency 0171-828 6288; Royal Town Planning Institute 0171-636 9107; English Heritage 0171-973 3000.

Now you can paint your listed building without demolishing it

In the past, making changes to listed buildings was considered demolition. Clive Fewins looks at a new government directive that puts the onus on the owner.

Just where does alteration end and demolition begin? The answer to this question has been plaguing owners of Britain's estimated 700,000 listed buildings (and 1.7 million unlisted buildings in conservation areas) for many years. Time after time owners of these buildings have complained that they cannot even pick up a paintbrush without obtaining listed building consent, and that local authority bureaucrats have been over-zealous in their interpretation of well-intentioned laws that were never intended to apply to such minor matters.

This has been a cause of particular friction in instances such as the ones where local authorities have defined the planned removal of a chimney breast or a portico as "demolition".

Since the introduction of the Town and Country Planning Acts in the 1960s many local authorities have been claiming that alteration and demolition are the same thing, preventing many householders living in listed buildings or within conservation areas from carrying out the simplest of tasks.

For owners of unlisted buildings in conservation areas trivial changes like trimming a tree, erecting a fence or changing a front door have required consent. This can be complicated to apply for, and obtaining it can take a long time.

However all this has now changed - or at least planners, conservation officers and other professionals in the business think it has - with a new government directive that theoretically makes it far easier for owners of listed buildings and houses in conservation areas to make alterations to their houses.

The new directive, Circular 14/97, results from a House of Lords ruling earlier this year in which the Town and Country Listed Building and Conservation Areas Act, stating that demolition of unlisted buildings in a conservation area requires consent but alterations do not, is clarified. Demolition is now defined as "a proposal to demolish all of a building".

However, it is still unclear as to how the new directive will affect owners of listed buildings because they need special consent for alterations which affect the character of the building, as well as for "demolition" proposals.

"In effect the ruling puts owners of listed buildings in a self-assessment situation as to whether they apply for listed building consent for alterations that fall short of total demolition," said Adrian Dobinson, a partner in the Bath-based Renaissance architectural design practice, who has been campaigning for such a relaxation for 20 years.

"Until there is a history of precedent established through the courts, just what will or won't constitute a change to the character of the building will be at the discretion of the owners and their advisers, in consultation with the local authority."

"The reality is that the vast majority of works short of total demolition can and will now be undertaken without consent."

However, if the local au-

thority considers the proposed alterations alter the historic character of a listed building it is still possible to issue an Article 4 Direction, a little-used device that removes permitted development rights and forces a householder to apply for consent anyway.

Planning committees have sometimes been reluctant to issue Article 4 Directions in the past, as they are obliged to pay compensation if the householder incurs any financial loss as a result of a reduction of his permitted development rights.

"In the absence of effective alternatives this may be the shape of things to come," Mr Dobinson said.

"Owners of listed buildings should be aware that local authorities retain the right to challenge works in retrospect, as happened in the celebrated case of Tory MP Teresa Gorman and her husband, who were heavily fined for making more than 30 illegal alterations to their historic farmhouse home."

Kenneth Dijkman, a local authority planner as well as a writer and broadcaster on planning issues, says: "Fortunately for the conservation lobby this directive is not as radical as it sounds. While some may think it has driven a coach and horses through the listed building legislation, local authorities still have the protection of Article 4, which many authorities use with confidence."

"With listed buildings, works not constituting 'demolition' are still likely to require consent by virtue of being alterations."

"The law has been redefined in an unclear way and the listed building legislation still exists. The redefinition is only really a matter of semantics and only time will tell if it has made any real difference."

'If someone wanted to bring in tarantulas, or 15 dogs, the residents' association could say no ...'

The price of living in a new, sought-after development may be Draconian rules. Mary Wilson reports on the estates where dogs are not welcome, washing cannot be hung outside - and unmarried couples have to be careful who dies first.

If you live in a detached house in the middle of nowhere, you have the freedom to do what you want when you want - clean the car, paint the house a garish colour, play loud music or keep a pack of huskies in your back garden. Should you decide to trade down to a new apartment, which is easier to run and more secure, you may find some of that freedom curtailed.

The lease will have conditions and restrictions in it to prevent un-neighbourly behaviour, but not all incoming residents are happy to be so constrained.

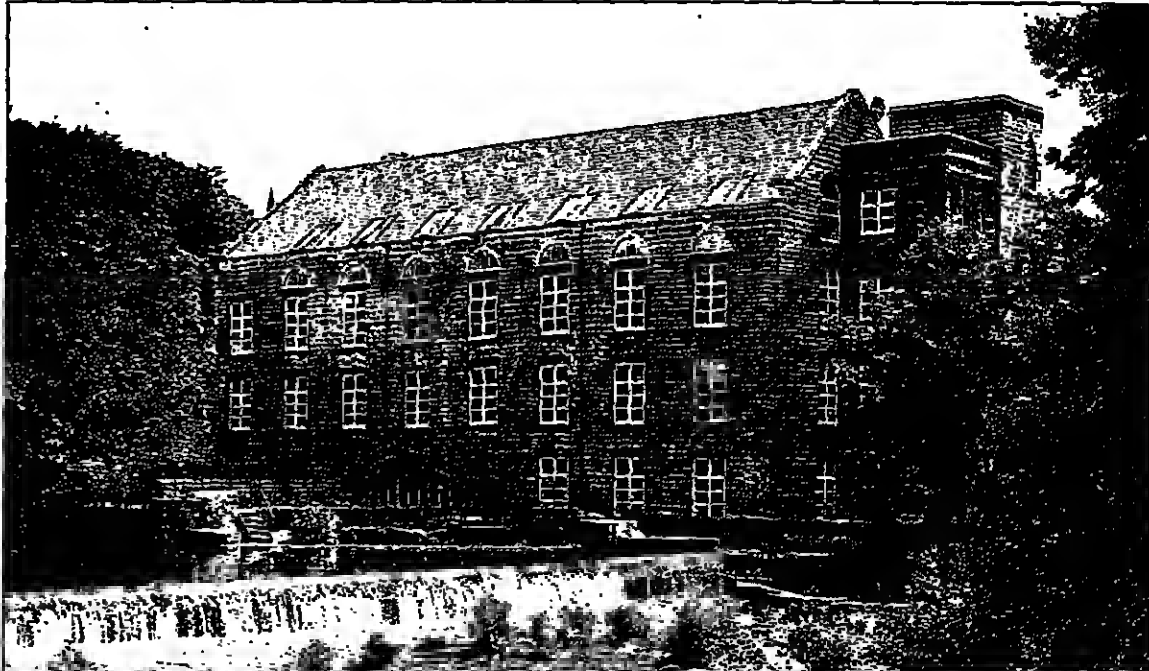
Apartment blocks may not be controlled quite so severely as in America, where the residents' board vets incoming purchasers, but there has to be some level of control, especially in high-value, low-volume developments.

"At a new development in north London, the wording of the leases is such to protect people from each other's excesses," says Trevor Abrahamson, of Glenree Estates (0181-458 7311). Owners will need a dog or cat licence from the landlord; they are not permitted to sublet; they have to clean their windows at prescribed intervals; the colour of their outdoor furniture and style of sunblinds has to be approved; and certainly no washing can hang outside to dry.

"Other restrictions include being barred from putting down hard floors anywhere they like, because of the acoustic insulation, or being unable to play an instrument out of social hours," says Abrahamson.

The biggest contention is over pets. Someone mowing in with their beloved pough will not be best pleased to discover that there is a restriction on the sort of pet. If one is allowed at all, the usual proviso is that it be small, well-trained and quiet, which cuts out many Rottweilers and yappy Yorkies.

At Parkbury, for example, an apartment development in Frankston Park,



In high-value, low-volume developments, even the colour of your furniture may be outside your control

Dorset, with 1.7 acres of private communal woodland and gardens - perfect for morning walks - owners are allowed a pet only with the prior written consent of the landlord.

"At the moment that is the developer. Artesian, but when all the flats are sold the landlord will be the residents themselves," says Paul Grimwood, the marketing manager. "So if other residents decide that your pet is a nuisance, you will have to do something about it."

The 12 large, three-bedroom apartments and two penthouses are being sold by the agent Stephen Noble (01202 557766), at from £242,500 to £345,000. He says: "At some developments there is a lifetime agreement, which means that when your pet dies, it cannot be replaced."

At Crosby Homes (Midlands) Symphony Court development in Birmingham, the company was as helpful as it could. "The lease stipulates that pets are allowed only with the permission of the landlord," says Keith Pepperdine, the sales and marketing director. "So if someone wanted to bring in a horde of tarantulas or 15 dogs, we, or the residents' association, could say no."

"However, we put in a cat tunnel for one person, and, for another pur-

chaser, built a couple of steps. Her cat was rather old, and she was worried it wouldn't be able to get up to the flap," he explains.

Leases nearly always have a nuisance clause in them, to prevent owners making an untoward noise, but this can be difficult to control. You may be told that you can have only fitted carpets, or be forbidden to play a television set or stereo loudly after midnight.

Another common prohibition is the erection of a satellite dish. Not good news for an avid sportsman, unless the building has one large, communal dish, as at Gleeson Homes' (01433 651532) conversion of Bamford Mill in Derbyshire.

At some developments you are not allowed to wash your car, nor can you keep commercial vehicles or carry out repairs. "I remember a builder, who bought a property at a development in East Kent, not being allowed to park his work van, with his business logo, in the car park outside his home," says James Best-Shaw, of Cluttons Daniel Smith.

At Springwood Manor, a Honeygrove development near Tonbridge in Kent, owners are not allowed to erect any external structures except for a sun blind, which has to match those already

fitted, or to keep a boat, caravan, motor home or pick-up trailer unless they are hidden away in a garage, or carry out spray-painting or welding.

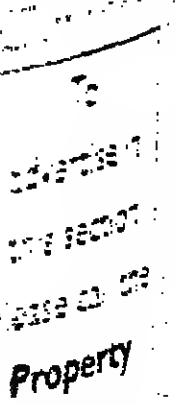
"Most of these restrictions are welcomed by our apartment owners, because they are designed to promote and enhance neighbourly relations and living in a communal environment," says Andrew Henry, of Honeygrove. (Apartments are for sale from £240,000 to £650,000, 01732 369935).

Where there is a minimum age limit, the rules may be complex. At a Crosby Homes' development of apartments at Sutton Coldfield, only people over 55 are allowed to buy. This is not a retirement development: the planning restriction was implemented to reduce the use of cars.

A married couple aged 45 and 55 years old can live at the development, and should the older partner die, the remaining spouse will be able to stay in perpetuity. If he or she were then to marry someone younger, and later died with the other partner still under 55, that partner would have to move out. However, should an unmarried couple buy there, with one being under 55, and the older partner dies, the remaining partner will not be allowed to stay on.

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The classic hobby that generates £1.6bn

Classic cars: antisocial gas-guzzlers, or a force for good? John Simister looks at the evidence.

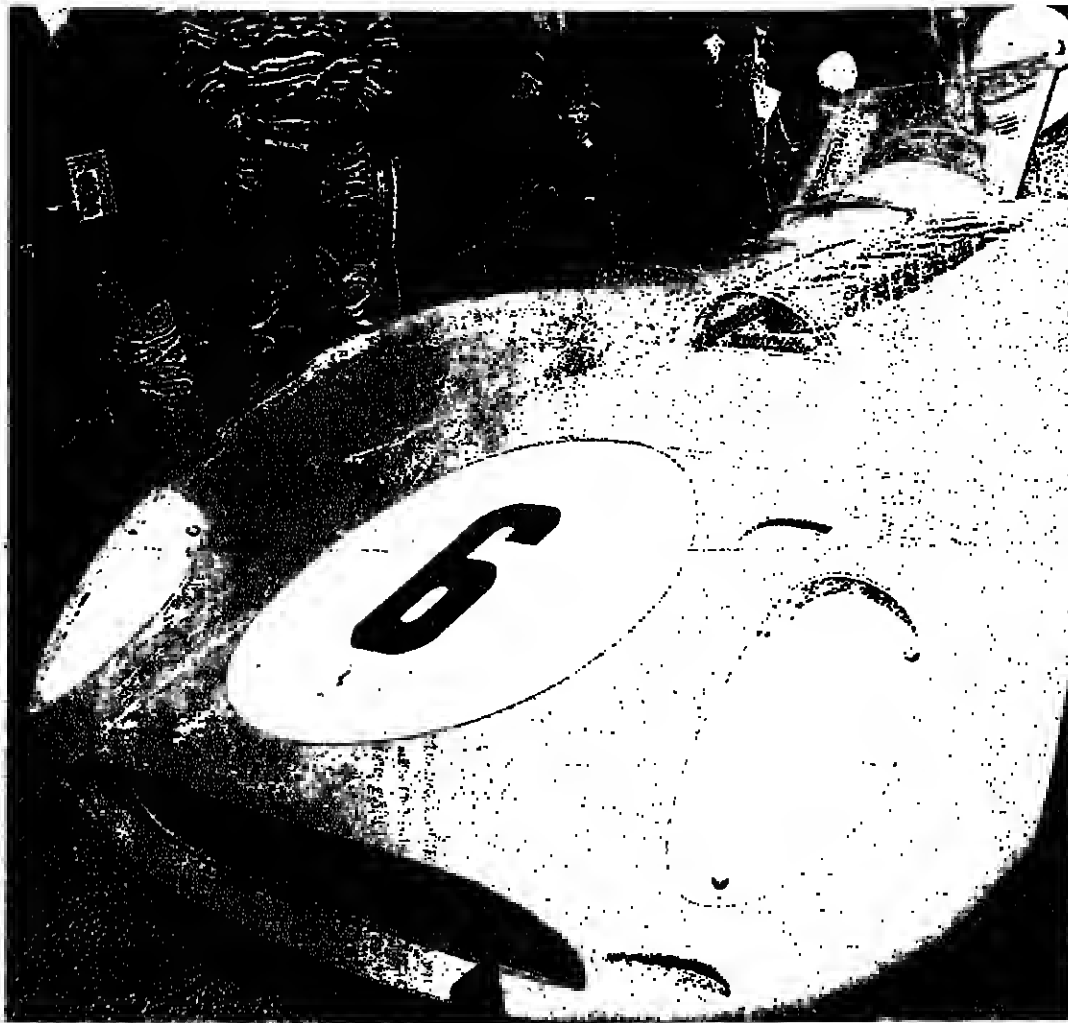
How do you feel when you see a "classic" car out and about? Pleased that a piece of history has been preserved, or outraged that we still allow these polluting old heaps to be driven?

There are forces at work to protect us from classic cars on the grounds that they are bad for our health, but the truth is that only the enthusiast's bank balance suffers. A survey carried out by the Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs shows that the law-makers would do well not to make life difficult for owners of classic cars. Any deleterious effect on the environment is minimal, while the industry that supports the hobby turns over £1.6bn a year for UK companies.

Of course, the federation would say that. It exists to protect the interests of classic car owners from encroaching, Brussels-generated restrictions, and closely watches legislation as it is enacted to make sure it does not affect the freedom to use classic cars. But the intention behind this survey was to prove that classic car owners, rather than a bunch of insignificant obsessives, have considerable economic clout.

The FBHVC sent a questionnaire to every member of every classic car club. For the purposes of the survey, "classic" meant any pre-1977 car with which its owner had a particular affinity. Owners were asked to complete just one questionnaire each, even if they belonged to more than one club.

The research was processed by the University of Central England, with the help of *Classic Cars* magazine, and the findings were presented to the House of Lords on 13 November. This is what



Ferrari set the pulses racing at the Goodwood Festival of Speed

Photograph: Mark Pain

emerged from the 36,000 returned questionnaires, and further research carried out by the FBHVC:

- There are 658,570 pre-1977 vehicles in existence, 64 per cent of which are licensed and on the road.
- 67 per cent of cars are not used as regular transport, contributing to the low average annual mileage of 1,224.

● The total UK vehicle count is 26.3 million, so roadworthy pre-1977 cars make up just 2.5 per cent of them.

● Annual turnover for classic cars – sales, repairs, restoration, parts supply, museum visits, events – is £1.6bn, £300m of which is generated by exports. That is more than you would

need to run every racing team in Formula One.

● More than 25,000 people are employed in providing products and services, many of them practising traditional, labour-intensive skills.

● Car museums and collections are visited by 380,000 club members a year, 15 per cent of them from overseas.

There are many more than 36,000 members of classic car clubs, so some of those figures could be higher. Certainly the classic car industry is a big earner and provider of livelihoods.

Why, then, has the FBHVC felt the need to publicise its cause? Restricting the use of classic cars (though the Government is against the idea) would be an easy way to be seen to be "doing something to clean up the environment". Yet, properly maintained, they are no more polluting per unit of exhaust gas than a relatively modern car made just before catalytic converters became a standard fitment.

Factor in the low mileages, and the environmental impact of classic cars is minute. If you want to see and smell real stinkers, spend a day in London following buses, trucks and taxis up a few hills. That's where the real problem lies, with tired-out diesel engines.

The other pressure on classic cars comes from the makers of new cars, who want the Government to offer incentives for scrapping cars 10 years old in the form of a rebate on a new car. Environmental and safety issues are trumpeted as the driving forces here, but it's hard not to detect an ulterior motive. Such a move would distort the new car market in favour of small, cheap, low-profit cars, just as it did in France, where the scheme has now been abandoned. The environmental argument is shaky, anyway, because it typically takes a decade – a car's average lifespan – before the energy saved in running a new, more efficient car instead of a decade-old one matches the energy taken to build it.

Provided they are in decent fettle (and that's an important proviso), it's greener to keep the oldies going. And there's a vast industry, bigger in Britain than anywhere else in Europe, ready to help you do just that. The classic car movement does much good and minimal harm, and the Brussels mandarins should leave well alone.

Bulging biceps but shame about the face

The Lexus is a fine car, no question. But an object of desire? Forget it, John Simister reports.

Why might you want a BMW, an Audi or a Mercedes-Benz? Your reasons could be to do with notions of fine engineering and sculptural design, of a crisply-honed driving experience involving a smooth engine and well-mannered handling. If so, the new Lexus GS300 is aimed right at your wish list.

Or it could be to do with notions of understated quality, an aura of integrity and permanence. The Lexus is looking good here, too. Then there's style and prestige, the pleasure that comes from looking at a beautiful thing and from knowing that others admire your taste and judgement. Another result for the Lexus? Well, oo.

So just when it looked as though the Japanese had cracked the German stronghold, they blow it. And what's a Lexus GS300, anyway?

It used to be a dramatic-looking upmarket saloon whose body design grew out of the concept car created by Giugiaro for the world motor show circuit. Launched in 1993, it has just been replaced by a new version because Japan's four-year model cycle has come round again. So much for permanence.

Anyway, it's this new version that we are interested in here.

This time, Toyota, the Lexus parent company, did the body design itself. Clearly, the designers

wanted to make their new baby look something like a Mercedes, because its front and rear lights have a very E-class-like design of separate lenses. The front grille is shaped similarly to the old car's – some stirrings of heritage there – but the sides look high and slabby despite some half-hearted blisters over the wheel-arches. Not Sunday-morning car-wash lust-inducing, then.

Nor does the interior fan any flames of desire, despite luminous white instrument faces, passable wood veneer, a CD stacker in the glovebox, deliciously damped controls and electric adjustment for the steering-wheel as well as the seats. The shape of the dashboard is just too dull. Still, there's the option of a stupendously effective, big-screen satellite navigation system complete with real-time moving map and a nonchalant vocal delivery. There's more room than in the old car, too, though the new one is shorter on the outside. That's achieved mainly by moving the engine further back, itself made possible by using a slimmer air-conditioner.

The engine. This is the best bit, to the old GS300, the straight-six, 3.0-litre engine sounded a shade rough and rorty at high revs, and the automatic transmission shifted its gears abruptly at times. But this engine, still a twin-cam, 24-valve straight-six (smoother than a fashionable V6, if less compact) is now both more powerful and sweeter, thanks in part to variable valve timing. With up to 218bhp on tap, this is a satisfyingly rapid car.



Lexus GS300
Price: £31,200 (S), £34,070 (SE). Engine: 2,997cc, six cylinders, 24 valves, 218bhp at 5,800rpm. Five-speed automatic gearbox, rear-wheel drive. Performance: top speed

143mph, 0-60 in 8.0sec. Fuel consumption: 20-25mpg. Rivals: Audi A6 2.8 quattro: £30,606. Best-looking of the prestige saloons, delightful detailing, 4WD for terrific grip.

BMW 528i SE: £30,880. Conservative to look at, satisfying to drive, but not the benchmark it was. Mercedes-Benz E280 Classic: £32,490. Low trim level puts Benz into Lexus price range.

New V6 engine is very smooth, car feels unbreakable. Saab 9-5 3.0 SE: £28,995. Best of the new 9-5 range, with lively "asymmetric" turbo V6 and good handling. Looks dated; quality not quite right yet.

Work the engine hard, and it will emit the creamy yowl of a good BMW. It will always be running at the optimum speed, too, because the new five-speed gearbox shifts responsively yet very smoothly. It's one of the best autos I've tried. There are similar plaudits for the suspension, for this is an agile car with precise steering, yet it soaks up bumps with no fuss or fidget.

It has a skid-avoiding Vehicle Stability Control, too, which selectively applies individual brakes and eases the

throttle if you try to pour too much power through the rear wheels on a slippery road. Not that you'll often feel it beep and jerk into action, because the tyres' grip is remarkable.

To drive, the GS300 is the equal of a BMW 528i, no question. Taking the standard equipment into account, it compares well on costs, too, whether as an S or as a leather-trimmed, gizmo-laden SE. But to gaze at, or to boast about, the Lexus falls flat. In this material world of ours, that's a problem.

MY WORST CAR/IAN DARKE'S HILLMAN IMP

The devil of an Imp

It was a truly horrible car. If ever there were a car from hell, this must have been it. A nasty little battleship-grey 1964 Hillman Imp, which cost me £150. I bought it before I'd passed my test – which took five goes. However, two of those tests were cancelled because of the weather and a civil servants' strike. So that meant I did not get to drive the Imp for quite some time.

When I did get to use it every day I soon found out that the seller had been less than honest about its condition, and construction, for that matter: the bodywork was made of newspaper.

I kept finding rolled up bits of the wheel-arches and inside the doors to cover gaping holes. The previous owner had also disguised the rust by just cover-

ing it in black paint. Yet I'd believed everything he had said about it being in good condition and reliable. The truth was that on every single journey something would go wrong. I lost count of the times I had to finish a trip on foot, or walk to the nearest phone box to call for help. Not the best way to start a career in journalism – by missing out on appointments or never making it there at all.

The longer I owned it, the worse the Imp got, overheating mostly. I found the location of the engine, in the boot, very bizarre. It was difficult to get at and always going wrong. That layout didn't help the handling much, and always felt as though it were teetering on the edge of an accident.

In fact, my scariest moment was meeting a car coming the other way, on my side of the



Ian Darke's Imp was largely built of newspaper

road, in pitch darkness. The driver must have been drunk: how we avoided each other I'll never know. But for me that sums the car up, because all the the Imp does is bring back really bad memories. What positive things can you say about a car that looked so awful, and was useless at getting you anywhere? In the end, it was utterly unsalable. I sent the Imp for scrap and replaced it with a pea-

green Triumph Herald which felt like a Rolls-Royce in comparison. If I'd been a boxer instead of a commentator, I think I'd have gone back to the seller of that Imp and sorted him out.

Ian Darke will be ringside at Madison Square Garden, New York, on Friday 19 December to commentate for Sky TV on Prince Naseem Hamed's first American fight.

MOTORING

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MARKET RESEARCH
33 DAILY HILL DRIVE, GURLEY PR6 ONE

ABA 87	1,850	FF 1030	1,400	LJL 40	1,500	184 RH	3,000
295 ADD	1,200	FFM 8806	1,500	LJL 208	1,400	188 750	1,000
9 AIE	2,500	GIL 59	2,500	LN 9705	1,000	189 2798	2,000
527 BAR	1,800	GLH 64	3,200	LNI 89	800	3333 SM	4,000
20 BEA	2,200	HL 100	1,000	17 MA	3,200	6666 SM	5,000
57N BH	1,500	IMH 001	1,400	17 MA	3,200	6666 SM	5,000
58L 7102	800	140 9405	2,200	17 MA	3,200	6666 SM	5,000
BW 7370	2,800	HL 25	1,400	17 MA	3,200	6666 SM	5,000
C 8809	1,800	HO 208	800	17 MA	3,200	6666 SM	5,000
658 CAC	2,800	140 9405	2,200	17 MA	3,200	6666 SM	5,000
50 CLM	1,400	140 9405	2,200	17 MA	3,200	6666 SM	5,000
DA 3778	2,800	140 9405	2,200	17 MA	3,200	6666 SM	5,000
DEZ 46	1,500	140 9405	2,200	17 MA	3,200	6666 SM	5,000
INOT 08 ZAG	1,500	140 9405	2,200	17 MA	3,200	6666 SM	5,000
285 DEL	1,800	140 9405	2,200	17 MA	3,200	6666 SM	5,000
325 DMD	2,200	140 9405	2,200	17 MA	3,200	6666 SM	5,000
10 MACDONALD	1,400	140 9405	2,200	17 MA	3,200	6666 SM	5,000
95 PCA	1,000	140 9405	2,200	17 MA	3,200	6666 SM	5,000
14 PCA	1,000	140 9405	2,200	17 MA	3,200	6666 SM	5,000
100N ALLAN PCA	1,000	140 9405	2,200	17 MA	3,200	6666 SM	5,000
PEC 87	1,000	140 9405	2,200	17 MA	3,200	6666 SM	5,000

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